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Alcuin

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Press Opinions

As the industry of Lecky produced a "History of Rationalism in Europe," a work marred by the author's inadequate acquaintance with the intellectual history of Christianity, so it is now the object of a group of Catholic scholars to write in successive monographs an account of the development of Catholic thought from the dawn of the Christian era, and this series—called "Catholic Thought and Thinkers"—has been started by Father C. C. Martindale in a volume styled *Introductory*. In five chapters the author surveys the interplay between orthodoxy and heterodoxy during five distinct periods of Church history—from the beginning to the death of Origen (254), from Origen to the death of Augustine (430), from the Sack of Rome (476) to the decline of the Middle Age (1303), thence to the Revolution (1789), and, finally, in the Modern era. Thus the framework is erected in which the various great Catholic thinkers will find their respective places, showing the continuity of Christian tradition and its orderly process of development. But Father Martindale's work is more than a framework: brilliant little pen pictures of the leaders of Christian thought, illuminating *aperçus* of their historical surroundings, apt summaries of the inheritance and legacy of each epoch, make the book exceedingly interesting, and will make, we hope, the public for which the series is designed eager for its speedy and regular appearance.

THE MONTH.

A series of volumes which ought to prove of great interest to the general educated public. Their aim is to provide a more or less complete account of Catholic thought from the earliest times down to the present day, and thinkers whose orthodoxy is not beyond suspicion will be included in the series. Father Martindale is responsible for the Introductory volume, and his historical survey, as we should expect from him, is able and broad-minded.

THE CHURCH TIMES.

Truly an ambitious scheme! Yet if we may conjecture from the success of Father Martindale's *Introductory*, the scheme is likely to be achieved with distinction. To compress within one hundred and sixty pages an account of Catholic "thought" from the days before the Council of Ephesus to the last Ecumenical Council of the Vatican is in itself something of an intellectual feat. Needless to remark, in so comprehensive a sketch little can be said in particular of the individual "Thinkers." Father Martindale has fortunately a very happy manner of saying the little that is just enough to indicate the Catholic Thinker's place in the historical setting. *THE CATHOLIC TIMES.*

Rarely have we read a book with so much pleasure as that which we have received from "Catholic Thought and Thinkers," by C. C. Martindale, S.J. The purpose of the series of which this is the title is to provide us with a continuous feast of Catholic thought, displayed in the makers of thought in each succeeding age. This programme has happily called forth an Introductory volume which provides exactly what was wanted—an explanation of the series and a rapid panoramic view of the procession of thinkers. This by no means easy task has been well performed by Father Martindale; the present volume, besides being of value to every cultured reader, will prove a most serviceable aid to the student in his theology and especially in the history of philosophy, and readers of the series will do well to keep this Introduction always by them.

CATHOLIC BOOK NOTES.

It gives a clear view of the development of Catholic thought from Justin Martyr through the Controversies to Aquinas and the Reformation, and then through the great Roman mystics and theologians to the Catholic renaissance, but it links the general development of European morals and philosophy, and shows how Catholic influence reacted on the general tendencies of the Christian era.

THE GLASGOW HERALD.

CATHOLIC THOUGHT & THINKERS SERIES
Edited by C. C. Martindale, S.J., M.A.

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CATHOLIC THOUGHT
AND THINKERS

Alcuin

By

E. M. WILMOT-BUXTON
F.R.Hist.S.

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Editor's Preface

THE scope of this series can be very accurately defined.

It is not meant to be a history of the Christian Church, nor even of Christian theology. Nor is it intended to set out the influence exercised in the world by the Catholic Church in every department alike, social, for example, artistic, or even moral. But Christian men have thought about their Faith in itself ; and about the world they live in, because of their Faith, and in relation to it. These volumes, therefore, aim at giving the reader pictures of eminent Catholic thinkers,[1] and a sufficient statement of what they thought, and of the substantial contribution which they thus made to the history of ideas in the world, and to Christian civilisation in particular.

The writers have aimed at allowing their subjects, as far as possible, to speak for themselves : only a necessary minimum of comment or criticism has been supplied. On the other hand, it has been wished that not bloodless schemes of thought, merely,

[1] This is not meant to preclude this series from containing, if desirable, studies of men who, like Origen or John Eriugena, may not have been fully orthodox, or who, like Lamennais, have ended in rupture, even, from Catholic obedience.

nor abstract theories, should be made available to our readers; nor again, detached "lives" of men and isolated personalities. Therefore a preliminary and a concluding volume have been planned, in which, respectively, are set out the massive historical movement within which these men were born, developed, and exerted their influence; and, the continuous currents of thought which they necessarily created, deflected, accelerated, or checked. It should be added that the respective authors have freely formed and expressed their own estimates of their subject-matter, and that the series as such is not responsible for these. Nor has it been intended that the method of treatment and its application should be absolutely homogeneous in all the volumes alike.

Thus these volumes are not meant, then, at all as propaganda or apologetic. They hope to supply an organic survey of Catholic thought and a "live genealogy" of Catholic thinkers; so that from a comprehensive view and continuous vital contact, each reader may draw such general conclusions as he is able; or enrich, substantiate, or correct, what he already possesses.—THE EDITOR.

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Alcuin

Scholar of the Eighth Century

A.D. 735–804

Chapter I

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ALCUIN



HE position of Alcuin as a Catholic thinker is very much more significant than is generally recognised by the casual reader of history. Most people are aware that he kept alight the flickering torch of Roman learning in Gaul; a smaller number know that by his teaching and his writings he also exercised a quite remarkably appreciable effect upon at least the two succeeding centuries and, in a less apparent form, upon a much longer period. Those who are already acquainted with his singularly modest estimate of himself might hesitate to consider him the most important figure of his century; others frankly state that his chief, if not his only

claim to celebrity is his close connection with the Emperor Charles the Great. Most English history books dismiss him with brief reference as the English tutor of the sons of Charlemagne ; and one has an uneasy suspicion that but for a nationality that reflects a slight ray of glory on a rather submerged era of our history, he would have escaped mention in most of them altogether.

Yet the fact is true that when we get a close combination of a man of action with a man of learning, the interaction of will and intellect that follows is likely to provide some intensely interesting results. The task of Charles at the time at which he was connected with Alcuin was the preservation of the outward unity of Western Europe, sorely threatened by the tribal conquests of the Northern and Central races. What the Catholic Church had done and was still doing, by means of her unique spiritual organisation, for the soul of Europe, Charles was engaged in doing for the mass of mingled races that formed her unwieldy body, by means of the sword. Force alone could never have accomplished

even an outward and hollow form of unity. Mind and will cannot be bent by sheer weight of conquest, nor the powers of the soul harnessed to a victor's chariot. It was here that Alcuin played his part.

On the Hill of Learning, even on its lowest slopes, all minds are free, though all are bound by the chains of intellectual law. It was by pointing the road thither, as well as by helping lame and laggard souls to climb its heights, that Alcuin gave indispensable assistance to Church and Emperor. He succeeded thereby not only in preserving the international oneness of Europe at that particular time, but in creating, or rather re-creating, a system of education that was to prove a strong bond of unity, and a most effective instrument of civilisation through troubled and chaotic ages, long after his own age had passed away.

At a superficial glance, these things are not apparent ; and those who are content to think that the chief importance of the task of Alcuin lies in the linking up of the intellectual life of England in the eighth century with that of the Continent,

will tell us that that task ended with the era of the sons of Charlemagne. Such a view is impossible in face of the fact that, not only did the system of Alcuin and the textbooks he wrote become part of the common life of educated Europe, at least till the days of the Renaissance, but that a far more intangible thing, the *spirit* of the Frankish schools, of which he was the actual founder, permeated mediæval Europe and modified her whole intellectual history.

It has been said, indeed, that the history of Charles the Great enters into that of every modern European state, and it is equally true to say that all that was most permanent in his Empire—not his conquests, nor his forced conversions, but the high ideal of mental culture in the midst of a most material world, the ideals of knightly chivalry, of domestic purity, of national well-being, as well as of true doctrine and practice of religion, that belong to his era—was inspired by Alcuin, Father in God, Minister of Education, adviser and teacher of the most striking figure of mediæval Christendom.

Curious indeed was that alliance—that of a gentle, self-disciplined English scholar with a gigantic soldier, full of strong passions and violent impulses, whose undoubted attraction to learning must have been half superstitious in origin—that respect for the unknown and the mysterious so strong among the Teutons—who, to the end of his days, could with difficulty tame his sword-hardened hand to the cramping servitude of the pen, who but for those gleams of intuition that opened up a new and wider world, might well have been content with his achievement of "creating an army out of a crowd of men," and of calling into existence the Second Empire of the West.

More curious still is the fact that the part of Alcuin in their joint task of upholding civilisation at a critical epoch, and of laying the foundation of future stability in law and government, education and morality, was played by a man who had no gift of originality, who shrank from the idea of innovations, who expressly disclaimed either wish or intention of tempestuous reform.

There are few more striking examples of the motive-power of the "still small voice" in an age of violence. The crying need of that particular epoch was not innovation, nor originality in thought or action, but a clear call to follow the well-marked paths of doctrine and learning already trodden by the Catholic Church of Christendom for seven centuries. In an age of disruption, of sudden violent conquests, of the mushroom growth of new nations, the one and only bond of peace and union was loyalty to the authority of the Church and her teaching; and without this even the outward manifestations of civilisation were threatened. And the greatest fatality which could have happened would have been the domination of the new races of that age by a master mind of egotistic fanaticism, a Mohammed who might have drawn all Western Europe after him, posing as the Messenger of God and His Prophet.

Fortunately for Christendom the actual master-mind of the time was content to sink his own personality, and to draw men by the cords of love to the old ways, the

well-trod roads of inspired authority and methods of intellectual activity.

And if, to modern readers, the methods of Alcuin seem trivial and timid, it should be remembered that during his immediate period of mind history, the northern and extreme western part of Europe, with which he had to deal, was at the kindergarten level of psychology, a level liable to be broken up easily enough by methods of force and daring originality.

Later on, when the foundations had been firmly laid by his initial efforts, came the need for stronger stuff, which awoke in that same quarter of the world the intellectual cravings of Scholasticism.

One may, however, question whether those cravings would ever have arisen—apart from the need of combating Mohammedanism—had it not been for the quiet work of a schoolmaster genius of the eighth century (see I. V., p. 69).

Chapter II

THE MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL WORLD OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY

SOME understanding of the moral and intellectual world of Alcuin's day is, of course, necessary in order to realise his position when he landed in Gaul in the year 782. In a succeeding chapter we will take a brief survey of the history of that remarkable people which was to form the medium through which his influence was to spread throughout Western Christendom.

At this point, however, it is important to remind ourselves of the fact that this young and vigorous Frankish race, though permeated, like all others which had once come into touch with Rome, with the military traditions, the ideals, and in some part at least with the civilisation of the Empire, tended by the force of its strong racial instincts, as well as by its mental alienation from the conquered people of

Gaul, to break off into isolation and independence, especially in matters of faith and morals. In those days the one bond that could draw together a shattered Europe, in her darkest period of disruption and fierce tribal animosities, was the faith, the moral influence, and the intellectual culture of the Catholic Church, and the importance therefore of bringing the Franks into close touch with her could hardly be over-estimated.

The strength of that bond, however, depended upon the loyalty, the morality, and also to a very large extent upon the intellectual equipment of the ministers and exponents of her Faith ; and just at a time when a singularly material-minded race, whose religion had for centuries been the sword, had, as it were, swung into the forefront of Christendom, the danger was that an ill-equipped priesthood would be swamped by an altogether illiterate laity, to the moral and spiritual confusion of both. To realise the position of the eighth century in this respect, we must take a rapid glance at the history of the educational world of Europe up to that

period, with special reference to Frankland.

From the first the Catholic Church had made the question of education, both religious and secular, in a very real sense her own. From the first she had realised that her ideal must be a reasoned faith arising out of trained and disciplined methods of thought, since doctrines imposed upon ignorant minds are apt to degenerate into meaningless superstitions. The real bone of contention was never the *need* of education, but the kind of educational system that would best meet that need; the result was a veritable Battle of the Books, a battle which, under different aspects, has lasted down to the present day.

For the modern man, accustomed to accept as a matter of course Greek methods of thought as the finest vehicle of literary or scientific expression, it is hard to understand the fierce contest that raged between the pagan world of education in the last centuries of the Empire, and the rapidly growing organisation of the Christian Church. It is impossible to judge this

contest by the conditions of to-day. What one has to keep in mind is the fact that those early centuries saw a constant and absolutely necessary conflict between Christianity and paganism; and every form of literature or philosophy that had a pagan origin was as suspect as the writings, some of them possibly harmless enough, of a modernist of to-day. Moreover, in dealing with people only just emerging from pagan beliefs, a clear-cut line was as much a necessity as that drawn between a modern "convert" and his previous place of worship. There must be no playing fast and loose with the old beliefs; they must be rejected once and for all. Later on, when Europe had accepted the Faith, and when paganism, in its old sense, was dead, the Church, as we shall see, turned readily enough to the stores of the classic world, "christened" Aristotle by the hands of St. Thomas of Aquin, and was among the first to revive the study of Greek literature. But during the first four centuries of the Christian era, although the speech, the civilisation, even a few details of the religious rites of pagan

Rome were absorbed and turned by her to the advantage of the Faith, the Church grew steadily more and more antagonistic to the use of pagan literature in her educational system.

To the minds of Tertullian, of Origen, of Jerome, even of Augustine, though he could not altogether condemn his earlier love, classic literature was permeated with evil. "Refrain," cried the voice of Authority, "from all the writings of the heathen. For what hast thou to do with strange discourses, laws, or false prophets, which in truth turn away from the Faith those that are of weak understanding? Dost thou long for poetry? Thou hast the Psalms. Or to explore the origin of things? Thou hast the Book of Genesis."

When this was the opinion of the Christian educators one can scarcely be surprised at the line taken by the Apostate Emperor Julian, who bade them cease to use the works of Homer if they only read him in order to show that his gods were evil spirits, and to leave the schools to pagan teachers and pagan books, requiring them to confine themselves to the Sacred

Books of their religion and to the children of their own faith.

This may have been the logical course, but one may be thankful that the Church saw two insuperable obstacles to following it.

In the first place, as Tertullian himself has naïvely confessed, the pupil was obliged to use the pagan textbook, " since there are no others from which he can learn (*quia aliter discere non potest*)."

In the second, the rapidly developing Church had no mind to have her limits thus circumscribed. Her mission was to the unconverted, and she had no intention of being shut out from the schools. With that remarkable wisdom which had already led her to use so many of the pagan rites and customs in her ceremonial, she decided not to leave the superlative mental training afforded by " grammar " and " rhetoric " to the foe, even if it involved a study of such heathen writers as Cicero, and Horace, and Virgil. As a fifth-century bishop, Sidonius of Lyons, declared, " We must press pagan science and philosophy into the service of the Church, and thus

attack the enemies of the Faith with their own weapons."

Already, a century earlier, St. Augustine had faced the situation, revised the opinions of middle life, and written in his seventy-second year a treatise *On Christian Instruction* which indicates in the clearest way the line he felt should be taken by the Church. "Quisquis bonus verusque Christianus est, Domini sui esse intelligat, ubicumque invenerit veritatem"—let every good and true Christian know that Truth is the truth of his Lord, wherever found. Let the Christian, escaping from the bondage of paganism, spoil the Egyptians. Let him appropriate the "liberal disciplines, well suited to the service of the truth." Let him take the best of the secular culture of the ancient world, and use it in the service of his Faith and to the better understanding of divine truths.

This, then, was the compromise adopted by the early Church. Let us see what its acceptance amounted to.

In the days when the Empire was still a flourishing organisation, "Grammar," the first of the liberal arts taught in her

schools, had comprised a close and critical acquaintance with the chief Latin writers of the classic age. Gradually, however, as the rage for oratory usurped the place of solid scholarship, grammar had become subservient to " rhetoric " in the schools, and mental training retired before a craze for ingenious forms of speech.

The chief use of the classic writers, in consequence, was as material for memorising long passages, which could be worked up as declamations ; a system which naturally cultivated the memory at the expense of the reasoning faculties. Even the art of Composition often became a mere trick —the skilful blending of well-worn phrases and *clichés*, fantastic and unreal as vehicles of thought.

A reformer who would combine enthusiasm for the Faith with zeal for a better system of education was a crying need in that early era ; but the Church in her lingering distrust of pagan taints, half-hearted, too, in her condemnation of the classics, failed to produce the man. Many of her foremost men, indeed, favoured more or less openly the empty rhetorical

training in which they had themselves been educated. Sidonius confessed the pleasure he experienced from reading Terence, though he half suggests that he regards it as a sin of youth. St. Hilary of Arles, Felix of Clermont, St. Remy, all educated in the strictly classic schools set up by Imperial Rome in Southern Gaul, approved of the old system much as a modern public school man of the last generation upholds Euclid and the Eton Latin Grammar against the claims of geometry and the direct method.

The early years of the fifth century, therefore, saw the work of three educational writers who show the result of an attempt to crystallise this rather chaotic system in textbooks which must have exercised a strong influence over the education of their own and succeeding generations, since they became the foundation of those used throughout Europe during the whole mediæval period.

One of these, Boethius (481–525), became the link between the classic literature of Greece and the mediæval learner, since he translated, or adapted, versions

of Aristotle for use in schools, and thus furnished the standard textbook on logic for one generation of schoolboys after another. He ranks among the last of the pagan philosophers rather than as a Christian writer, though succeeding copyists managed to tinge his works with Christian hues.[1] His book, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, tells the old myths of Greece and Rome with much grace and charm, and was among those translated by our English Alfred, as being "one of the most necessary for all men to know," for use in his Anglo-Saxon schools. His contemporary, Cassiodorus, was a Roman senator who, in his old age, became a monk, and gave his whole time, apart from his religious duties, to writing a Compendium, designed to cover the whole educational system of that day.

Therein is grammar, adapted from the textbook of the Roman Donatus; rhetoric, based on Cicero; "dialectics," borrowed for the most part from Boethius.

[1] This quite legitimate view of Boethius is stated without prejudice of the opposite view, namely, that Boethius was a genuine Christian. Cf. p. 8, and I. V., pp. 63–65.—Ed.

These three departments were now definitely labelled as Arts, and became the *Trivium* of the mediæval world.

He also deals with four *Disciplines*—the *Quadrivium*, comprising arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music, the first three treatises being largely derived from Boethius.

To a century later belongs Isidore, a Spanish bishop of whom Alcuin speaks with admiration rather beyond his deserts, as "lumen Hispaniae."

The *Origines* of Isidore form an encyclopædia of information on every subject under the sun, much of which is naturally very vague and inaccurate. His account of the seven liberal arts is borrowed wholesale from Cassiodorus, but his book is valuable chiefly as a collection—a kind of anthology—of passages drawn from both classical writers and the Fathers of the Church, dealing with every department of knowledge.

This scanty store of textbooks represented all of classic lore and Christian comment thereupon that the Church proposed to teach her pupils, as far as the

secular State schools were concerned, up to the end of the sixth and during part of the seventh century. Before that time, however, we find a new influence at work, and the gradual disappearance of the secular school from the scene, as far as Gaul was concerned. This new influence came originally from the Eastern Deserts, the dwelling-place of those hermits whose ascetic ideals had made deep impression on the imagination of one Cassian, pupil of St. Chrysostom and friend of St. Germanus, the missionary of Gaul.

As the founder of the monastery of St. Victor at Marseilles, Cassian may claim to have been the founder of monastic discipline in that country as early as the end of the fourth century, and to have pointed out the road travelled by the sons of St. Benedict in later days. His rule of hard, unremitting toil, the energetic work of his monks as farmers, teachers, students, made powerful appeal to the active instincts of the as yet but half civilised Franks, and the walls of several monasteries began to rise throughout the rapidly extending Frankland. St. Martin

founded his society at Tours and spread his influence throughout the valley of the Loire. St. Honorat made his island monastery at Lerins the centre of religious life for the valley of the Rhone. So that Southern Gaul, at least, was already familiar with the monastic ideal when St. Maur introduced the Benedictine rule in the latter years of the sixth century.

Now where a monastery was built or a bishopric founded, there was also a school, monastic or episcopal, in working order ; and the respect shown for these institutions by the ever-advancing Frank assured their stability in a time of great chaos and confusion.

Before the invaders the old state or municipal school founded by Imperial Rome in Gaul had fallen to pieces ; sometimes because the city which formerly supported them ceased to do so under the stress of conquest or loss of trade wealth ; sometimes because pupils simply ceased to attend them. For the Frank in those days, though he approved and absorbed much of the military organisation of the Empire and was but half a Christian in

the early days of his conversion, was yet very much less than half a pagan in the Church's sense of the word, and neither knew nor cared anything for Roman culture, even when filtered through Christian channels. But he recognised and respected the self-denying work of the monks and clergy ; and where education survived at all in that era of darkness covered by the fifth and sixth centuries, it was to be found in the school of the monastery or the cathedral.

The character of the education given there can be found in the Rule of Discipline drawn up by Cassian for the monks of the West. Where the Church of an earlier day had compromised in the matter of teaching and reading classic literature, the stern rule of Cassian was explicit.

For the children of the school as for the monks of the choir, there was to be but one aim, one ideal. Study and manual toil alike were to be used as a preparation for the life to come ; work for material advantages, and love of learning for its own sake, were to be equally discouraged. As a youth, sitting at the feet of St.

Chrysostom, Cassian himself had soaked his mind in the incomparable literature of Greece. But in other years, in his famous *Collationes*, he makes his friend Germanus deplore the memories of the literature which, he said, dragged his soul from heavenly contemplation. Consulting the Abbot Nestorius as to the remedy, he was drily recommended "to read the Sacred Books with the same ardour that thou once didst those of heathen writers—then shalt thou be freed from their influence."

From this standpoint it naturally came about that the system of education laid down by Cassian's rule was extremely limited in extent. No provision whatever was made for boys who were not destined to become monks. All learnt to read in order to study the Scriptures and to follow the Breviary and Missal, to write that they might copy the Psalter, and to sing that they might do justice to plain chant as interpreted by St. Ambrose. A modicum of arithmetic was allowed—based upon the calculations determining the dates of Easter and the feasts dependent upon it. Of mental training—the *gymnasia* of Greece—

there was little trace. Yet one is bound to confess that the men produced by such a system were those to whom the conquering Teutons looked with awe and deference for their effect of moral force, strong organisation, and social weight. Neither pagan remnant nor Arian heretic, popular as the latter was elsewhere, attracted the newcomers ; and when Clovis, finding himself conqueror of Gaul, looked round him for a worthy ally, it was to St. Remy, the Gaulish bishop, representative of Christian Rome, that he turned.

At that particular time, then, the monastic and cathedral schools of Gaul, by their upholding of a striking, though narrow ideal, fulfilled the particular needs of their own day. The system in itself, however, possessed elements of weakness too marked for long endurance. Neglect of the part played by the intellect in soul development weakened the powers of thought and reasoning ; theological learning began to disappear ; all but the most far-fetched and fanciful interpretation of the Scriptures ceased ; literature and philosophy alike vanished from the schools. It seemed,

indeed, as though the old gibe of Julian the Apostate, that when men exchanged the study of the Ancients for that of the Evangelists, they would descend to the mental level of the slave, was to be fulfilled. Education, in the real sense, no longer existed ; instruction on the most narrow and elementary lines took its place. The only scope for originality of any kind survived in the rage for fantastic parallels and curious metaphors by which well-nigh every passage of the Sacred Books was illustrated.

The condition into which the learning of Gaul, once so celebrated, had fallen by the end of the sixth century, is described, vividly enough, though in very bad Latin, by Gregory, Bishop of Tours (544–595), in his *Historia Ecclesiastica Francorum.* Rightly enough, he connects its decay with the political condition of the time, a cause of weakness inevitable in the wild days of the Merovingian dynasty.

" Inasmuch as," he says, " the cultivation of letters is disappearing, or, rather, perishing, in the cities of Gaul, while goodness and evil are committed with equal impunity, and the

ferocity of the barbarians and the passions of kings rage alike unchecked, so that not a single grammarian skilled in narration can be found to describe the general course of events, whether in prose or verse. The greater number lament over the state of affairs, saying: 'Alas, for our age! For the study of letters has perished from our midst, and the man is no longer to be found who can commit to writing the events of the time.'

"These and like complaints, repeated day by day, have determined me to hand down to the future the record of the past; and though of unlettered tongue I have nevertheless been unable to remain silent respecting either the deeds of the wicked or the life of the good. That which has more especially impelled me to do this is that I have often heard it said that few people understand a rhetorician who uses philosophical language, but nearly all understand one speaking in the vulgar fashion."

The somewhat peevish complaints of this bishop "of unlettered tongue" effected no reform, and during the seventh and eighth centuries a great darkness descended upon the schools of Gaul.

Their guardians were themselves in sorry case. The monasteries, weakened by the fact that they stood outside episco-

pal control, were held in lessening honour and respect as the power of the bishop increased. And the bishops, once the guardians of both spiritual and temporal law and discipline, the protectors of their flock, had unfortunately shaken themselves free, to a large extent, of the jurisdiction of the Pope, and, unfettered by religious responsibility to a central power, tended to develop more and more into feudal magnates, or warriors, gaining in wealth and temporal power what they lost in spiritual prestige.

Hence the half-civilised Frankish chiefs who ruled them, often with clash of temper and of sword, saw no reason why they should not interfere even in religious matters. One of these, Chilperic I, even proposed to the Church in Gaul a new Confession of Faith, in which all distinctions between the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity were to be omitted. Another tried to impose a new alphabet, or, rather, an extended version of the original —an innovation which would have involved the destruction, as no longer "up to date," of all manuscripts before his

time. Even in the days of the Carlovingians, and in the time of Charlemagne himself, such tendencies were by no means uncommon, were indeed inherent in the character of the Frankish rulers, with their naïve egotism and mingled ignorance and intelligence. It is scarcely necessary to point out the pitfalls thus threatened, and the dangers of future heresy, dangers which it was in great part the work of Alcuin to avert.

While Gaul was in this parlous state, the torch of learning had been rekindled elsewhere in a striking manner. On Monte Cassino, in the year 528, the first Benedictine monastery had opened its doors ; by the end of the sixth century the sons of Benedict were ready to go forth into the world and to " instruct all nations." Study, both as a duty and a privilege, played a conspicuous part in the Benedictine Rule ; and though it made no explicit mention of the classics of antiquity, there was strong recommendation of " such expositions of the Holy Scriptures as the most illustrious doctors of the orthodox faith and the Catholic

Fathers had compiled." This, at any rate, sent the student to originals instead of to a " Compendium," in theory, if not in practice. Moreover, such studies were to be undertaken for the refutation of errors ; which suggests that books containing such " errors," be they pagan or more strictly " heretic," must be read in order to be condemned.

The most important reform, however, lies in the fact that the high place accorded to study by the Benedictine Rule, raised education, with its methods, from the mire, and set it among the seats of the mighty. (Cf. I. V., p. 65.)

Not for many a long day was its benign influence to touch directly the land of the Franks. Yet many years before the coming of the Benedictine Alcuin, there had appeared in Frankland a reformer from another quarter, representing a School that in the future was to affect both Charlemagne and his tutor in a curious fashion.

This was St. Columban, who, in the early years of the seventh century, appeared as a monastic zealot among the

Vosges mountains which bordered the country then known as Austrasia. Columban hailed from Ulster, famous for the learning of its monasteries and schools, though the source of its erudition is still something of a mystery, as is the fact that the one country of Western Europe which never came under the discipline of the Empire, yet received with joy the Faith as taught by St. Patrick, and never swerved from it in spite of storms and stress.

The monastic system of Ireland was a legacy from the teaching of the fourth-century Cassian, as taught in the school of St. Martin at Tours, the future home of Alcuin, and carried thence to the Irish by St. Patrick during the fifth century. The Rule in force there closely followed that laid down by the ascetic Cassian, and as taught by Columban was even more austere, and still closer to that of the Desert Fathers of the Thebaid. (Cf. I. V., p. 66.)

For the moment the enthusiasm of the Irish Saint bore good fruit in Gaul, as his flourishing institutions at Luxeuil and

St. Gall bore witness ; but the temperament of Northern Gaul was not suited to great austerity, and the rigid rule of the Celtic monk was quickly exchanged for that of the sons of Benedict, with its greater elasticity, when the latter came first into touch with Gaul.

In days to come the school represented by Columban was to reappear in a curious connection with Alcuin and the Imperial Court, in connection with a suspicion of unorthodoxy, which seems to have hung about the skirts of the Church in Ireland in those days, and was, perhaps, a result of that country's early lack of discipline at the hands of Imperial Rome. Even during the seventh century Columban himself was summoned before a synod of Frankish bishops on a charge of heresy with regard to the observance of Easter. For the Franks, after the conversion of Clovis, were strictly orthodox in details, and saw in an apparently trivial matter the underlying principle that was to be so strongly emphasised in England by St. Wilfrid and the Venerable Bede. The keeping of Easter at the date appointed

by Rome signified a loyal acceptance of papal authority ; and the holding to local traditions in this matter, even when combined with enthusiastic acceptance of Catholic doctrine as a whole, weakened the position of the Celtic Church both in Britain and Ireland, and became a cause of contention and suspicion for many a year.

In the end, good sense and loyalty combined to make Ireland one of Rome's most faithful daughters ; but the position of Columban, as representing the Irish Church of the seventh century, sufficiently accounts for the swift passing of his influence in Gaul.

As far as classical education was concerned, the teaching of the Celtic school was, in some respects, more liberal than that of the rest of monastic Europe. St. Patrick and his followers taught the remnant of classic lore that had survived the schools of Cassian—something of Greek, a trace, at least, of Aristotle, Cicero, Virgil. They used, too, the textbook of Martianus Capella of Carthage, speculative and tinged with pagan theories, though interpreted by Christian teachers and

edited by them. The need, moreover, of justifying their views as to the correct date of Easter by reference to the stars had made the Irish monks astronomers of a kind, though the science they practised would more correctly have been called astrology. Altogether, save for the one point of difference with Roman discipline, the spirit of Irish learning contrasted most favourably with the dull and ossified system then prevalent in the schools of Gaul.

Now before this time, the torch of the Faith had been handed on from Ireland by way of Iona, to England, by Celtic teachers such as St. Aidan and St. Cuthbert, only to be extinguished by the shock of Anglo-Saxon invasions and conquests, save in Holy Island and among the mountains of the West. Yet before the day when Columban appeared in Gaul, the flame had been rekindled in this land, and straight from the central and undying fire of Christendom.

A few years after the decay of learning among the Franks had called forth the wail of Gregory of Tours, another Gregory, well named the Great, had set on foot

the work, not only of conversion but also of education, among the uncivilised and unlettered settlers in Britain (A.D. 597). With Gregory a new life was infused into education, all the more important because it was to permeate the system and Rule of St. Benedict, which he so ardently upheld, and which was soon to supersede all the other monastic ideals of Europe.

The character of the education approved by St. Gregory will be easily understood if we realise the circumstances of his time. Given a chief bishop full of enthusiastic zeal for religion, burning with love of souls, living at an epoch when social disorganisation, anarchy, and the desolation inseparable from the constant invasion and harrying of the Lombards, had reduced Italy almost to ruins, it was inevitable that his aims must be strictly and unswervingly directed towards one end. What did the art of rhetoric matter when souls were perishing for lack of the Gospel message? What were the niceties of logic when the lambs of the Church were starving spiritually and physically in the midst of universal woes?

That Church, then, must be fortified by every means in her power, as being the one and only weapon of contention against heathendom and social ruin. Nothing that would aid in the campaign was too trivial to be neglected. Ritual and music were but stones in the sacred fort, but each must be well and truly shaped and fitted into place. And as the one safe and speedy means of training his workmen in the task of conversion, monasteries on the model of Monte Cassino must be built and established far and wide throughout Europe, from which missionaries could be sent forth to all quarters of the Continent.

It is clear that in the early years of the mission of St. Gregory and his enthusiastic followers, for men who shrank from no danger and who carried their lives in their hands, the only study of importance or value would be the Gospels, or the universal heart-language of the Psalms.

Yet, as the work of conversion progressed, it became evident that something more of the nature of mental training was necessary if the teacher were to hold his own. Less than seventy years after St. Augustine

had landed on British shores, we find Theodore of Tarsus, the Greek, sitting as seventh Archbishop in the episcopal seat of Canterbury, and introducing the study of his native language and literature into the Cathedral school. Within a few years this " Canterbury learning " had become as famous as that of Gaul, and Ireland, and Rome, and, rapidly spreading, had been welcomed in the school at York, soon to rank as one of the most famous in England.

And now we can see the beginnings of Alcuin's spiritual and literary genealogy. Among the renowned schools of the North were those founded at Wearmouth and Jarrow by Benedict Biscop ; and the pupil of Benedict was Bede, the *Venerabilis*, our first annalist, who claims for St. Gregory the title of " Apostle of the English." Bede had among his pupils at Jarrow one Egbert ; and this Egbert became in later days the teacher of the boy Alcuin, in the school of York. Twenty years after the death of Bede in 735, there perished in a pagan outburst against the Faith one who was to prepare, in a very special manner, the path of Alcuin in the

land of the Franks. St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, had gone forth from his Benedictine monastery near Exeter in the early years of the eighth century, to convert the heathen tribes of that land—an ascetic figure, with eager voice and burning eyes, urging, persuading, living and dying a martyr to the Faith.

"In that part of Germany which the Eastern Franks inhabit," wrote Rudolf, a century later, "there is a place called Fulda, from the name of a neighbouring river, which is situated in a great forest. The holy martyr Boniface, who was sent as an ambassador from the Holy See into Germany and ordained Bishop of the Church of Mayence, obtained the woodland, inasmuch as it was secluded and far removed from the goings and comings of men, from Carloman, King of the Franks, and by authority of Pope Zachary founded a monastery there in the tenth year before his martyrdom."

The school connected with this monastery was destined to be the spiritual and intellectual home of one of Alcuin's most famous pupils, and to be closely affected by his influence. At the time of its founda-

tion, however, Boniface was more concerned with the reform of life than of learning, as far as the Franks were concerned. To him, full of zeal for the Benedictine rule of loyalty to the Holy See, the condition of the Church in Gaul at the middle of the eighth century was a scandal and a shame. He wrote to Pope Zachary imploring him to draw men together by his rule, now there was no deference paid to canon law, and now matters of practice and doctrine were neglected owing to there having been no Ecclesiastical Council called for over eighty years. Bishops were accused of being "drunken, injurious brawlers, bearing arms in regular battle, and shedding with their own hands the blood of their fellow men—heathen or Christian." "The law of God and the religion of the Church had fallen to pieces."

Although much of this state of affairs might have been traced to the demand of the Frankish kings that bishops should shoulder the feudal burdens and give military service in their own person, if they could not provide substitutes, the keen

eye of the English monk had pierced the surface and seen the underlying cause to be the lack of responsibility to the Head of Christendom, the want of correlation with Rome. This, then, was made his immediate object of reform. At the Council of Saltz, in 742, the Frankish bishops were induced by him to give in their complete allegiance to the Holy See; and the Abbey of Fulda, founded by him, was the first monastic institution among the Teutons to be placed directly under papal jurisdiction. As a direct result, Church and King made holy alliance. The Frankish chieftain, Pepin, protected the seat of the Papacy from the rough hand of the Lombard; his own solemn consecration at Rheims secured for the royal power the whole weight of the Church.

Before his death as a missionary martyr among the heathen tribes of Friesland, Boniface had not only succeeded in reforming a Church and a State. He had roused in the breast of a boy of thirteen an ideal of civilisation, of discipline, and of learning, that was to bear fruit in later years in the joint work of Alcuin and of this

lad, Charles, the young son of Pepin. It is, perhaps, not too fanciful to think that the reason for the deliberate choice made by Charles of an English monk, as his future adviser and minister of education, was his boyish remembrance and admiration of the strong and authoritative personality which had then captured his youthful imagination. For hero-worship belongs to the earliest as well as the most modern days ; and it was the admiring memory of Boniface that led to the call of Alcuin to Frankland. (Cf. I. V., pp. 66-68.)

Chapter III

THE FRANKS



GREEK proverb which may be freely translated "You had better have the Frank as your friend than as your neighbour," was the saying quoted by Eginhard concerning a nation which, in early days, was the terror of Western Europe, and, in later times, became the medium by which the torch of learning was to be rekindled within her borders.

In order to realise the nature of Alcuin's task in that respect it will be well to take a brief survey of the story of that warrior people, which, owing mainly to the personality of its rulers, played for a brief period so important a part in the history of Europe.

Little is known of the origin of the Franks, save that they were of Teuton race and members of the Sicambrian League of Rhine Germans. Ever since the third century of the Christian era they had taken

a foremost place as a fighting nation, and had made frequent invasions of Gaul. In the fifth century Clovis, chieftain of the Salians, their leading tribe, made himself master of the northern province of the kingdom of Burgundy, and of the southern province of Aquitaine. In the sixth century the Frankish Empire stretched from the River Inn to the Bay of Biscay, forming by no means a united kingdom, but a mass of petty States linked up by the dominant personality of the Merovingian rulers, who, in Gaul, were as kings over a conquered people, and in Germany as chieftains among lesser chieftains.

The first appearance of the Franks in Gaul had been in the rôle of an almost totally uncivilised horde of savages ; but, like all other tribes which came into touch with the Empire, they had rapidly absorbed all that Rome could teach them of discipline and military skill, as well as a certain rough kind of primitive civilisation. In the days of Clovis—that is, in the fifth century—we see them not so much as barbarian raiders as hard bitten, well-trained soldiers serving under a military

genius as their chieftain. Their type of character is reflected in that of Clovis himself, that strange mixture of savage cruelty and hardly acquired self-discipline. The *History of the Franks*, written by St. Gregory of Tours in the latter half of the sixth century, gives an apt illustration of his type of temperament.

The warriors of Clovis had plundered a church and carried off, among other things, a large and richly wrought bowl. Forthwith the bishop of that district sent a message entreating the chieftain to return at least this one vessel ; to which Clovis made reply that he himself must take his chance with the rest, but that if, when the booty was divided, the bowl fell to his share, he would return it to the bishop. With a genuine wish to do his best for the Church, the chieftain only awaited the division of the spoil to make petition that the bowl should be handed over to him apart from that which fell to him by lot ; upon which his warriors made respectful reply that, since everything really belonged to the man who had led them into danger and victory, he

must take what he wished. But one surly fellow chose to cavil at this decision and, raising his battle-axe, he smote the bowl a devastating blow, saying, " Naught shalt thou have beyond what the lot may give thee." Amazement fell upon his companions at this behaviour, but the chieftain said not a word. Taking the hacked and dinted bowl he handed it to the bishop's messenger, bidding him return it to his master, and forthwith turned away to brood over the incident for the space of a whole year. At the end of that time he ordered a parade of his regiment to be made, and walked among their ranks until he saw the man who had smitten the bowl. " What weapons are these ? " he cried, pointing to the soldier's equipment. " Neither spear nor hatchet is fit for use." And snatching the latter he threw it to the ground. Then, as the fellow stooped to recover it, Clovis buried his own axe deep in the fellow's skull. " Thus," said he, " didst thou to that bowl a year ago."

The story of this people, apart from their strange characteristic of mingled

savagery and chivalry, is full of romantic incidents. The marriage of Clovis, however, to the Burgundian princess Clotilda, only a child but a fervent Catholic, is no mere detail of romance. It was the immediate cause of a conversion which proved the turning-point of Frankish history. In days when the tenets of Arianism had captured the greater part of Europe, it secured the faith of Gaul, and won for the land, one day to be known as France, the title of Eldest Daughter of the Church. The baptism of Clovis, moreover, secured for the Franks the alliance of the Catholic Church, and so proved the foundation stone upon which the future Empire of Charlemagne was to rise. The day, therefore, upon which St. Remy, Bishop of Rheims, bade the fierce warrior "*Mitis depone colla Sicamber ; adora quod incendisti, incende quod adorasti,*" and laved him in the waters of baptism, may truly be called the birthday of the Frankish Church and of the Empire of the Franks.

From that time Clovis was styled "Rex Christianissimus" ; and when Rome looked outside her borders for aid in the

long struggle with Arianism, it was to the Franks that she appealed. As to the nature of the Frankish conversion and the influence it had on other nations, that is one of the matters that cannot possibly be judged by the standards of to-day. Among half-civilised peoples, the faith adopted by a strong and successful tribe was bound to win respect and adherence, even if only partially understood, and it would be futile to investigate motives of conversion in an age when a man's religion was symbolised by his sword. To the end of his life Clovis remained a fierce warrior, whose highest Christian ideal was the extermination of the enemies of his newly adopted faith, combined with a more or less respectful attitude towards the " God of Clotilda."

The real importance of the matter lay in the formation of an alliance between the finest fighting people in Europe, needing only the aid of Rome to make themselves supreme in the western provinces, and the Catholic Church, hard beset by heretics and barbarian invaders. From that time we find the half-converted Franks

posing as the supporters of the Catholic Faith and of the civilisation of Imperial Rome, and in their mental and spiritual ill-equipment for their great task lay one of the most insidious difficulties with which Charlemagne and Alcuin had to deal.

Henceforth, the regular yearly campaigns which formed the ordinary routine of the nation, were directed openly against the Arians, either in Gaul or elsewhere. Into the details of that long struggle there is no need to enter here. It is enough to realise that it was as the adherents of the Faith and civilisation of Rome that the Teuton people gradually made themselves masters of the West. After a great victory over the Arian Visigoths of Southern Gaul, we see the palace in Lutetia, in which the Emperors Julian and Gratian had once dwelt, occupied by Clovis, acting as Roman pro-consul, though long years were yet to pass before Lutetia became Paris, and before she became the capital even of Western Frankland. There he maintained his supremacy by a series of bloody deeds and treacherous designs, which cleared all relatives likely to be

rival claimants to the succession from the path of his sons. And thence he passed in death to the Church of the Holy Apostles, the church which he and Clotilda had built together in Lutetia to be their final resting-place.

At the time of his death Clovis had not created a new kingdom in Gaul, although the Franks were sufficiently supreme there to impose upon the original inhabitants their own code of Frankish law. This law was but a thinly disguised form of Roman legislation upon which certain national customs had been grafted, and is only another proof of the fact that, long before the days of the Teuton invasion of Gaul, the language, the civilisation, and the government of Rome, had profoundly affected the Germanic tribes of central and northern Europe.

Almost exactly three hundred years elapsed between the advance of Clovis upon Gaul and the arrival of Alcuin at the Frankish Court. Throughout that period we may look for and find the same prominent features—the clash between the desire of the new nations, of which the

Franks were now the leaders, to preserve the institutions of Rome, and the tendency to revert to the customs of their own barbaric origins. Fortunately for Europe, Roman administration and organisation, military and civil, had been too well absorbed in Gaul ever to be entirely lost, even when the Western Empire, shaken by barbaric inroads, appeared to be tottering to her fall. For two mighty and enduring witnesses to her greatness remained. As the Empire weakened and lost her tight grip upon her provinces, the Catholic Church had strengthened her bonds of unity, brought in new nations to the Faith, made her influence felt in every department of life. It was the conversion of England straight from Rome in the end of the sixth century that saved our own country when the shock of the Anglo-Saxon invasion seemed for the moment to have wiped out all traces of Roman civilisation ; it was the close connection of Rome and Gaul through the alliance of Popes with Frankish kings that decided the fate of the future France.

And although in every case the new-

comers retained to some extent the customs, primitive laws, and memorials of their ancestors, the actual system under which men were ruled and judged was the civil and ecclesiastical law of Rome.

Thus, even after the First Empire of the West had passed away, it was still to Rome that men turned their eyes, and from Rome that they expected a leader and deliverer during the dark years of the sixth and seventh centuries. Dark indeed they were, for the civilisation of Clovis, primitive enough in its characteristics, had degenerated almost into barbarism among his descendants. The fifty years that followed his death were, it is true, marked by rapid conquests of territory ; but with them a period of bloodshed and savage treachery set in which lasted well into the eighth century. These were the true Dark Ages of history, and not until the fall of the Merovingian line of Clovis do we find any sign of light in the gloom. The condition of the Church and its ministers has already been noted in the description of Gregory of Tours, and it did not improve in the century that followed

his period. We have seen the fate of education under these conditions in the last chapter ; that it did not altogether die out is probably due to the fortunate change of dynasty in the year which brought the new line of the Carolingians into the foreground.

The founders of this dynasty, Pepin of Herstal, and Charles Martel, his son, Mayors of the Palace in the days of the last Merovingians, were not content to be merely the nominal rulers of a loosely connected group of principalities. Their first object was to rule the Franks as monarchs rather than chieftains ; and when this was once attained they were prepared to use their power outside their own boundaries. It was by his successful attack upon the Saracens of the southern provinces that Charles Martel prevented an influx of infidels from northern Spain into Gaul ; and it was naturally to him that Pope Gregory III turned when sore beset by Lombard foes.

From the moment that the Embassy from Rome reached the Frankish Court dates the connection foreshadowed in the

days of Clovis, between the seat of Empire and the Frankish nation ; and it was by the hands of the successor of St. Peter that this connection was riveted and made firm.

Acting boldly as an international power, the Holy See deposed Childeric, last of the line of Clovis to claim the throne, and appointed in his stead as " Rex Francorum " another Pepin, son of Charles Martel. With stern approval the Franks surveyed the scene, when, after their own ritual of election had been performed, and the new chieftain had been raised aloft upon a shield amid the clash of arms, he was crowned with the diadem of Rome and anointed with the sacred oils by the bishops of the Catholic Church (A.D. 752).

Two years later, after the Lombards had twice been driven back from Rome by Frankish troops, Pepin was hailed as " Patrician " and protector ; and he then proceeded to show his goodwill still further by handing over to the " Republic of the Romans " the newly conquered cities of Susa and Pavia, to form the nucleus of the future States of the Church.

With his reign we see the commencement of a new era for the Franks. For three centuries they had ruled in Gaul, on both sides of the Rhine, in more or less close contact with the civilisation of Rome and the discipline of the Faith. For a time they had reverted in some degree at least to their former condition of professional militarism ; but after the era of the Merovingians had passed away, the Frankish people began to show distinct signs of development. Traces of social comfort and refinement were to be found, together with an elementary knowledge of art and craftsmanship, and a respect, if not a love, for the learning as yet almost unattainable in their land. The incessant military activity of that day was still an obstacle in the way of anything like intellectual life ; but signs of mental activity were not wanting, together with healthy curiosity as to the unknown.

All these germs of mental life must have been quickened by the coming of St. Boniface, newly arrived from a land that had kept its reputation for learning. And the Frankish sense of loyalty to Rome

served meantime as his chief support in his zealous work of conversion among the German tribes subdued by the Frankish king.

It was, moreover, from the hands of St. Boniface, the representative of English learning and civilisation, that Pepin received his crown ; and, as we have already seen, it was the love and veneration stirred by the missionary saint in the breast of a thirteen-year-old boy, Charles, son of Pepin, that first shaped the idea of a Renaissance of learning in the Court of the future Emperor of the West.

Such is the story, in outline, of the race which was to form the material of Alcuin's work. And if it seems out of place in a book dealing with the Thinker himself rather than with the history of his time, it must be remembered that, in days so remote from the present, it is necessary to know in some detail the circumstances with which he had to deal, since these are bound to modify profoundly the form and presentment of his thoughts.

Chapter IV

ALCUIN AT YORK

MEANTIME, while these various forces were converging upon his unconscious personality, Alcuin was born, somewhere about the year 735, of noble parents, in the neighbourhood of York. Of his actual childhood we know nothing directly, but a reference in one of his letters shows that, as a very young boy, in accordance with the pious custom of the time, he was dedicated to the Church and put under the charge of the household of a bishop or of a monastery. In this letter he thanks the "Brotherhood of York," which, he says, "had watched over the tender years of childhood with a mother's love, borne with pious patience the thoughtlessness of boyhood, and, with fatherly chastisement, had brought him to man's estate."

The Cathedral School of York, to which he evidently refers, was, at that period, second only to Canterbury in importance,

as far as English schools were concerned. There, through the zeal of Paulinus, first bishop of the city, the Rule of St. Benedict, the high ideals of St. Gregory, the discipline approved by St. Augustine had been introduced, and had been developed by learned and pious ecclesiastics. For a time there had been a danger that the loyalty of the northern diocese to the See of Rome might be affected by the influence of the Celtic Church, once so strong in the North. But this danger had been removed once and for all by the energy of Wilfrid and the wisdom of Theodore of Canterbury. From elsewhere than Iona another influence had been brought to bear upon the School of York during the eighth century. The latter years of the seventh century had seen Benedict Biscop founding the twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, and, in his zeal for these children of his heart and brain, ransacking Gaul and Rome for builders and glass workers, for carvings and wall-paintings, that his people might learn, through eye as well as ear, the mysteries of their Faith. Books and teachers

were an even more pressing necessity, and for them he went to the Schools of Ireland, to Lerins in Gaul, to Canterbury, and, of course, to Rome. Hence it came to pass that Bede, his most famous pupil, educated by him and by his successor Ceolfrith from the age of seven, reaped the advantage of the widest culture of his day. Learned Irish scholars, passing as missionaries through England to the Continent, would sojourn for a while at the northern monasteries and give from their abundance to the eager young scholar. Benedict himself was soaked in the atmosphere of Rome and ever ready to share his knowledge with his pupil. Canterbury, through Archbishop Theodore, had handed on a priceless legacy of discipline and organisation. Lerins and other Gallic monasteries had provided some of the rare books of that day.

"All my life," wrote Bede of Jarrow, "I spent in that same monastery, giving my whole attention to meditating on the Scriptures; and in the interval, between the observance of regular discipline and the daily duty of singing in the church, I made it my delight either to be learning, or teaching, or writing."

Here, then, we find the source of the atmosphere in which Alcuin was brought up ; for the close friend and literary partner of Bede was Albinus, and his favourite pupil was Egbert, both of whom were to be the future masters of the school of York.

Life in that school, in days when Egbert was archbishop and director of studies, has been described by his pupil in a graphic way. All the morning he taught his pupils, instructing them in Latin literature, in Greek, in Roman law, astronomy, and music, but most of all in theology. At noon he celebrated the chief Mass of the day, which was followed by dinner and recreation. The latter was enlivened by the discussion and debate of various literary questions arising out of the morning studies. Some form of physical exercise followed, and then came study of a lighter kind, such as " the nature of man, of cattle, birds, and beasts," and of the " properties of numbers." This was followed by Vespers, after which the students knelt to receive the blessing of the archbishop at the close of the day.

The actual teaching at York during

Alcuin's boyhood appears to have been shared between Archbishop Egbert and Elbert, the former expounding the New Testament, the latter giving instruction in rhetoric, grammar, jurisprudence, poetry, astronomy, a kind of physics, and the Old Testament. In the really delightful verses in which he describes his life there, Alcuin says that Elbert knew well how to " rejoice their thirsty minds with the waters of doctrine and the dew of heavenly learning. That he made grammar clear, poured forth copious streams of rhetoric," made some rehearse the rules of jurisprudence, others recite verse, or " on swift lyric feet " mount the slopes of Parnassus as embryo poets. As to the lighter subjects of the course, he " turns their eyes to view the sun and moon and sky with planets seven, expounding the cause of storms, of earthquake shocks, and the distinctions between man and beast and bird." He expressly mentions the " study of numbers as a means of fixing the date of Easter," no small arithmetical task, into the depths and mysteries of which he guides their youthful minds.

This list seems to exclude two very ordinary subjects—music and geometry. But music is hinted at in a line referring to the " cadence sweet of Castalia's flutes "; and geometry, or measurement of the earth, probably included the natural history and geography already mentioned.

Evidently this Elbert was a born teacher, attracting boys of " distinguished talent, attaching them to himself by his teaching, his affectionate, his fatherly care."

> Indolis egregiae iuvenes quoscumque videbat
> Hos sibi coniunxit, docuit, nutrivit, amavit.

So says his pupil Alcuin, one of those very " lads of distinguished talent," who, with his friend Eanbald, requited his affection for them by a devout hero-worship that found expression in one of the poems of the former, written in his old age. In this he tells how Egbert's love of new ideas in education and literature sent him on many occasions to the monasteries of the Continent in search of books and information from other sources, and there is little doubt that the famous library of York was the fruit of his passion for knowledge.

In later years, when Alcuin, the student, had become Alcuin the Master of the Palace School and Minister of Education to the most renowned prince of Christendom, he writes begging for leave to send youths to England who may obtain thence necessary books and so bring into France the Flowers of Britain, "that the Garden of Paradise be no more confined to York." And in this poem of his later years he gives a description of its contents, most valuable as a source of information as the contents of an eighth-century library. It must be remembered, however, that in this respect York was exceptional. A scholarly writer of our day says, indeed, that the library of York at this period far surpassed any possessed by either England or France in the twelfth century, whether that of Christ Church, Canterbury, of St. Victor at Paris, or of Bec in Normandy.

For as yet the heavy hand of the Northman had not fallen upon England, and the days of Alcuin were those of which Alfred the Great was to write wistfully in his Preface to St. Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis* a century later, "reminding you, my

bishops, how in former times foreigners sought wisdom and learning in this land, though we should have to seek it abroad now if we wanted to have it."

The list of books mentioned by Alcuin in his poems is remarkably eclectic in scope. It includes the works of the "ancient fathers" of the classic days of Greece and Rome—Aristotle, Cicero, Virgil, Lucan—or at least some portions of these writings. The "fathers of the Church," —Jerome, Ambrose, Hilary, Athanasius, Augustine, Orosius, Leo, Gregory the Great, and Chrysostom—are there, with modern historians, such as Bede and Aldhelm, and grammarians such as Donatus, Probus, Phocas.

The poem reads, indeed, as though the precious books, inscribed on sheepskin and enclosed between richly ornamented boards, were actually catalogued by the writer according to their positions on the shelves or recesses of the library. For we get first the group of Catholic Fathers from Jerome to Fulgentius; then a shelf of historians—the two modern historians, Bede and Aldhelm, and next to them a

group of ancient history writers, represented by Boethius and Pliny. Next comes the shelf of logicians and rhetoricians, Aristotle and Cicero, with lesser lights such as Sedulius and Juvencus, Clement, Prosper, Lactantius.

Then we get back to pure literature in Virgil, Statius, Lucan, followed by a group of books dealing with the art of grammar and literary style—Probus, Donatus, Priscian.

The verses conclude with an assurance to his readers that "many more books would be found there, masters of art and speech and clear style in prose; but that their names would weary the pen of the writer to declare."

This catalogue is not only interesting in itself, it also shows pretty plainly the stage which education had reached in England, as well as in the more enlightened parts of the Continent, in the eighth century. The books named include some few Greek writers, and though it is possible the latter may have been read in a Latin translation, the impetus already given to the study of Greek by Theodore of

Canterbury, and the undoubted knowledge of that language in the Irish Schools of that day, suggest the probability that it was not unfamiliar in the School of York.

As regards the " pagan " classics, the prejudice of earlier days had evidently been transformed by a compromise that accepted Aristotle and Cicero, Virgil, Statius and Lucan, Donatus and Priscian ; though these were studied in close connection with their great opponents, Augustine, Jerome, Gregory the Great. For purposes of general education the compendiums of Boethius, Cassiodorus, and Bede, no doubt held the field, together with the work of Isidore, which Alcuin does not name, probably because it was too well known to need mention, being the most popular textbook of that day.

When Archbishop Egbert died, he was succeeded in his office by Elbert, whose place as " scholasticus," or Master of the School, was then taken by Alcuin, newly ordained to the diaconate. Fourteen years later, when Elbert passed away, the latter became Curator of the Cathedral Library (780). Already the hot breath of the

coming tempest, when the arts of peace were first threatened and then destroyed by uncivilised hordes from the North, was making itself felt ; and there was sore need of enthusiastic book-lovers in England as well as across the Channel. " My master, Egbert," wrote Alcuin in later days, " used often to tell me that the arts were discovered by the wisest of men, and it would be deep and lasting shame if we allowed them to perish for want of zeal. But many are now so faint-hearted as not to care about knowing the reason of things."

It was this keenness of questioning, the eternal " why," that gives us, in a nutshell, the secret of Alcuin's success as a schoolmaster, both at York and across the seas. For the fact must be faced that most of the textbooks used by him, apart, of course, from the Catholic Fathers and the "classics," were hopelessly, intolerably dull. Even the luminous reasoning of Aristotle had been obscured by the interpretation of lesser men, and by its presentation in a meagre abridgment such as was that of Cassiodorus ; and the wide outlook of

literature, science, and theology, had suffered most cramping condensation in the encyclopædic and inaccurate work of Isidore.

Only a teacher of real genius could make such dry bones live. But if it be true, as some men say, that in training the mind it matters very little *what* subject is taught, and very much *how* it is taught, the debt of mediæval education, and even that of later days, to Alcuin and his teachers is very great. For lifeless textbooks in the hands of a dull teacher produce a degree of boredom and mental dyspepsia that destroys the very hope of knowledge. Therefore, when we read in those days of scholars flocking from the Continent, as well as from all parts of Britain, to sit at the feet of Alcuin, we may rightly conclude that his method for finding the "reasons of things" was not only original but attractive, and that his own keen enthusiasm for knowledge had proved infectious to the younger generation.

Those of his pupils whose names have been preserved are all men of note in one way or another. Luidger, one of the

many who hastened from overseas to York, became Bishop of the new-made See of Munster in Saxony. Eanbald, one of his favourite English pupils, became in later days Archbishop of York. Witzo, Fredegis, and Sigulf, loved him with so deep an affection that they gave up hopes of preferment in their native land to be with him in the unknown Frankland. Another, Osulf, who was one of the same group, was to prove the Judas of the little band and to call forth pathetic letters full of fatherly grief from his former master.

Not that his whole time was spent in their actual instruction. Difficult as was the travelling of those days, the strong international current that pulsed from the heart of Rome through the arteries of Christendom, made journeys to that city a matter of course for most men of letters and affairs. And to educationists international communication was a sheer necessity, a necessity to whose urgency the world of to-day is only beginning to awake. So when we find the "scholasticus" Elbert travelling to Rome through the land of the Franks, accompanied by his favourite pupil,

then perhaps twenty years of age, we may imagine him pointing out to the interested Alcuin the comparative rudeness and ignorance of its inhabitants. That the young man probably showed unusual interest in them may be conjectured from the dying words of Elbert, fourteen years later. He speaks of his desire that Alcuin should fetch from the Pope the *pallium* for Eanbald, his successor, and adds: "I want that you, on your return from Rome, should revisit the Frankland ; for I know there is much for you to do there."

Two years after that first journey, supposing it took place, as seems likely, in 766, Charles the Great, Alcuin's future friend and pupil, had become King of the Franks. Whether they had actually met face to face in the interval between his accession and Alcuin's journey to Rome for the *pallium*, is doubtful. The anonymous biographer of the latter says Charles had "known him" before this last occasion of meeting ; if so, the young king, though far too busy at that time to take any steps for the reform of education among the Franks, may have begun to lay his plans for the future.

The amazing part of the story is that a king who had been incessantly engaged, since the beginning of his reign, in successfully fighting Lombards, Saxons, and Saracens, should not only formulate, but actually cause to materialise, an ideal of mental culture that was probably suggested to him first of all by his admiration for St. Boniface. He himself had had small chance of education. As a lad he had followed the usual routine of hunting, riding, swimming, and the use of weapons; but so far had literary education fallen into disuse that this Prince of the House of Pepin had not even learnt to hold a pen. Latin he knew, as a spoken language, the changing Low Latin of Gaul, debased and ungrammatical as judged by classical standards ; but mental training on literary and scientific lines must have been a highly respected, yet apparently impossible, ideal.

Yet, rough soldier as he was, Charles had ever an eye for a scholar ; and if, as may be the case, he came across Alcuin on a second visit of the latter to Rome, in the year of his own accession, there were

probably other reasons of attraction towards him. Even in those days it must have been possible for the young King to get a glimpse of the pleasant wit and warm human sympathy that were the marked characteristics of the English scholar in later years; and from that time it is probable that the King marked him down for further acquaintance.

Six years after his accession Charles paid his first visit to Rome, and was received in a manner that foreshadowed future events. Not only as the first King of the Franks to enter the city was he honoured, but as the Defender of the Faith of Christendom, the Conqueror of the Lombards, those persistent foes of Rome, and the prince who had brought in the heathen Saxons, vanquished by his arms, to the Church. Crowned with the famous Iron Crown of Lombardy, and hailed as "Dux" of Rome, he gave to the Church in return for these marks of honour the conquered "exarchate," certain cities and provinces of Lombardy, and prepared to return to Frankland. But that his visit was not entirely removed from

practical affairs appears from the fact that he brought back with him a certain Paul known as the Deacon, a scholar of Lombardy, who should be the instructor of a new, or revived, royal college of Aachen. Some say that Peter of Pisa also accompanied him. Others think that Peter dwelt at the Court of Pepin, and had there taught grammar to the prince in his youthful days. This is difficult to reconcile with the testimony of Charles himself to the effect that " the study of letters had been well-nigh extinguished by the neglect of his ancestors," and with his own undoubted difficulties in composing an ordinary letter.

It is true, however, that Einhard, the contemporary biographer of Charles, states clearly that Peter " taught the King grammar " ; so that we may conjecture that, after the Court school for his young sons and those of his nobles had been set up under the charge of Paul and Peter, Charles seized opportunities arising out of the brief intervals between his campaigns to seek some tuition for himself.

The want of success of this preliminary

effort at setting up a "Model School" was due, no doubt, to his choice of instructors. Peter of Pisa seems to have proved inefficient either through age or ineptitude. Paul the Lombard, however able and learned, could not be *persona grata* to nobles who despised the races they had conquered, and he himself could scarcely be expected to act in zealous support of one whom his nation regarded as a half-civilised tyrant. He probably succeeded in teaching Charles to understand a little Greek, and some of his clerical pupils to read it to some extent. But his real interest lay in his task of correcting the faulty and imperfect breviaries of Frankland, rather than in the education of an unwilling and probably openly hostile Court; and it must have been with relief that he retired, in 787, after thirteen years of uncongenial toil, within the gates of Monte Cassino, where he wrote that *History of the Lombards* which has made his name more famous than his unwilling sojourn among the Franks.

Six years before Paul withdrew from

the world, and probably about the time he ceased actually to teach, Charles and Alcuin had met again. We have seen how, in 781, Alcuin had travelled to Rome to obtain from Pope Adrian the *pallium* for Eanbald, his friend and fellow-pupil of former days in the School of York. On his return he happened to linger at Parma, then preparing to receive the famous King of the Franks, who had just left Rome after witnessing the coronation of his young son, Pepin, as King of Italy. Possibly the contrast between the culture of the Papal Court and that of his own rough surroundings had stirred Charles anew to deal with the difficulty of introducing some degree of mental training for the latter—a difficulty far greater than that of conquering Lombards or converting German tribes at the point of the sword. The meeting with Alcuin seemed a solution. Here was a man of fit age—he was six years older than the King, then in his forty-first year—noted for his learning, born of a race akin in origin to the Franks; of a race, moreover, that with the exception of the Irish, had alone

maintained its hold on learning in troubled days. It is probable, also, that there was a strong personal attraction between the burly, blue-eyed prince and the middle-aged Deacon of York that counted for more than respect for learning. If one might hazard a conjecture based upon the characterof Charles as shown both in his actions and conversation, it was the recognition of a gift of humour, the quick smile of the well-controlled mouth, the gleam in the shrewd eyes, the keen knife of wit cutting through the ponderous speeches of courtiers and bishops, that, at Parma, drew Charlemagne to Alcuin. And in his turn, the scholar of Northumbria, a province more than once aided in earlier days by the Franks, would look with friendly gaze upon the prince of that people, would also as an Englishman be mindful of the work of St. Boniface in their land, and would be very willing to follow in his footsteps.

During that meeting at Parma, no doubt, the proposal was made and urged that Alcuin should become Master of the Palace School at Aachen. He himself was

ready to agree if he could get the permission of his King and Archbishop. That his superiors were reluctant enough to lose him is shown by the stipulation of Archbishop Eanbald that his departure was not to be considered final.

In the year 782, then, Alcuin, with some of his pupils as assistants, sailed once more across the narrow seas, and hastened to take up his duties at the Court of Charles the Great.

Chapter V

THE PALACE SCHOOL

THE Palace "School," which had probably existed in a rudimentary form some years before the coming of Alcuin, was a class composed originally of the sons of the chief nobles, of the young members of the royal family, and, whenever his duties allowed it, numbered the King himself among its pupils. It would be rash to say that under Alcuin it became the germ of a University; for it made no wide appeal at that time to Europe, and the instruction given was necessarily elementary and restricted. But it did develop into a kind of "model school," a centre from which learning was to spread itself abroad, and a school, moreover, that prepared for many different avocations of life.

It differed from the Monastery schools both in its more varied class of pupil and in its wider curriculum. The latter, as we have seen, based closely upon the

Gregorian tradition, aimed solely at preparing the future ecclesiastic or monk for the religious life, and taught little but plain chant, enough Latin to read the Divine office, and enough arithmetic to calculate the date of Easter.

At the Palace School, though some of the pupils might be future bishops or abbots, the majority were destined to be statesmen, soldiers, men of affairs ; and some were actually filling those offices when, following the example of their King, they came to sit at Alcuin's feet.

Let us, before going further, get a picture of this " school " and of its pupils, all of whom were destined, in some degree, to influence the history of mediæval thought by means of the teaching they received there.

The most striking figure is, of course, the King himself, who, during the eight winter months that usually formed an interlude between his annual campaigns, was a regular and enthusiastic attendant. Of him we get a minute description from the pen of Einhard, his constant companion.

"He was stout and strong of body, of a lofty stature, yet not beyond just proportions; for his height was certainly not more than seven times the length of his feet. His head was well rounded, his eyes large and piercing, his nose rather long, his luxurious hair of a flaxen hue, and his face bright and pleasant to look upon. His whole person, whether he stood or sat, was marked by grandeur and dignity; and though his neck was full and short, and his body stout, he was otherwise so well proportioned that these defects passed unnoticed. He was firm in gait, and his appearance was extremely manly, but his refined voice was not entirely in keeping with his figure."

Next him would sit Leutgarde, best and most faithfully loved of the many wives of Charlemagne, some of whom were bound to him in lawful wedlock, and some were not. "My daughter Leutgarde," Alcuin affectionately calls her; and in a contemporary account of his school by his friend, Bishop Theodulphus of Orleans, we get a charming sketch of her.

"Among his pupils sits the fair lady Leutgarde, bright of intellect and pious of heart. Simple and noble alike confess her fair in her accomplishments and fairer yet in her virtues.

Her hand is generous, her disposition gentle, and her speech most sweet. She is a blessing to all, a bane to none. Ardently pursuing the best studies, she stores the liberal arts in the retentive repository of her mind."

At various times Alcuin would also teach in the Palace School the six royal children, offspring of an earlier wife, Hildegarde. These would comprise the three young princes—Charles, King of Burgundy, the favourite son of his father, though by no means the most satisfactory of Alcuin's pupils ; Pepin, the youthful King of Italy ; and Louis, King of Aquitaine, and the most worthy successor of Charlemagne, always dearly beloved by his instructor, who held him up as a model to the rest.

A story told by Alcuin's unknown biographer illustrates his attitude towards this youngest son. On one occasion Charles, coming with his three boys to visit his former instructor at Tours, asked him : " Master, which of my sons do you think should succeed me in the dignity which God has granted me ? " Alcuin looked at Louis, the youngest, but the

most remarkable for humility, on which account he was considered despicable by many, and said: "Thou wouldst have a magnificent successor in the humble Louis." Charles listened in silence, but afterwards "when he beheld those kings (Charles and Pepin) enter the Church of St. Stephen with a haughty step, and Louis with humble deportment, for the purpose of prayer, he said to the by-standers: 'Do you see Louis, who is more humble than his brothers? Verily, ye shall behold him the illustrious successor of his father.' Afterwards, when Alcuin was administering to them the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, the humble Louis bowed before the holy father and kissed his hand. Whereupon the man of God said to Sigulf, who stood beside him: 'Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and whososever humbleth himself shall be exalted. Verily, I say unto thee, France will joyfully recognise this man as Emperor after his father.'"

Near the three princes we find an eager group of student princesses—Rotrude, and Bertha, the future wife of one who was, in

later days, to become St. Angilbert, and Gisela, who would have been a motherless babe of two years old at Alcuin's first arrival at the Court. Another Gisela was there, the young Abbess of Chelles, sister of Charles, whom love of learning had drawn from her cloister that she might learn theology at Alcuin's feet ; and with her was probably her close friend and companion Richtrud, or Columba. For these two, in later days, Alcuin wrote his Commentary on St. John's Gospel, a work which they so eagerly and impatiently looked for, that he " was compelled to send it to them piece by piece."

Then came a group of royal relatives—Angilbert, the future son-in-law of the King, a gay young noble, too much devoted to theatrical joys and to " declamations" to be highly approved by his teacher, but destined in future years to be the saintly Abbot of St. Riquier ; and Adelhard and Wala, the King's cousins, with their sisters Theodora and Gundrada ; Risulfus, the future Bishop of Mayence. Fredegis, and Witzo, and Sigulf, the youths who had accompanied Alcuin from York,

were also there ; and Einhard, the quietly observant biographer of future days, to whose pen we owe most of our knowledge of the Palace School.

Others came later, drawn, no doubt, by various motives, and inspired by the energetic example of their ruler.

" I knew," wrote Alcuin to Charles on one occasion, " how strong was the attraction you felt towards knowledge, and how greatly you loved it. I knew that you were urging everyone to become acquainted with it, and were offering rewards and honours to its friends in order to induce them to come from all parts of the world to aid in your noble efforts."

Thus at one time or another practically all the future bishops and abbots, and other ecclesiastical dignitaries of Frankland, came under Alcuin's tuition. There was Anno, the Eagle youth (Aquila), " borne as on eagle's wings above the common interests of life," who, as Archbishop of Salzburg, carried out to the full the ideals of emperor and teacher, and did not omit, in his newly founded library, to place a copy of the complete works of his former master.

Adelhard, already mentioned as the

King's cousin, as Abbot of Corbey, and Prime Minister in later days to King Pepin, had ample and well-used opportunity for repressing clerical abuses and maintaining the standard of learning. He wrote a book on "The Order and Management of the Royal Household and the whole French Monarchy under Pepin and Charlemagne," of which, unfortunately, only a brief abstract remains.

Another pupil, Riculf, afterwards Archbishop of Metz, became also a notable promoter of education; and at the Council of Metz, at which he presided in 813, was one of those who insisted upon it being the duty of the clergy not only to provide schools for lay pupils, but to see that they attended them regularly. Others there were, most of whom played their part manfully in handing on the torch enkindled by Alcuin in the School of the Palace.

As for the local surroundings of that school, these probably varied according as the King was in residence at Ingelheim on the Rhine, or Aachen, between the Rhine and the Meuse. The latter became

the seat of Empire, and so probably the most permanent home of Alcuin during these earlier years. Already it showed the influence of the civilisation of Rome upon a rough and warlike race. The palace was renowned for its architecture, its gardens, its baths ; close to it stood the stately basilica decorated with mosaics and treasures taken from the palace of the conquered Theodoric at Ravenna. Thither rich presents, including a deed of gift, symbolised by a key of the Holy Sepulchre, were dispatched to Charlemagne by Haroun-al-Raschid, the renowned Emperor of the Mohammedan world ; and keys of the Holy Places were also sent by the Patriarch of Jerusalem. No doubt such significant happenings proved fruitful topics of discussion in the school, though by that time Alcuin had left it for another sphere of work.

That the members of that little society worked together in a very free and happy atmosphere may be gathered from the fact that pupils and master were known by affectionate and often jesting nicknames. Thus Charles was familiarly known as

David, and occasionally, when he had acquitted himself particularly well, as Solomon. Alcuin himself was known as Flaccus and Albinus, the latter being the Latin version of his name, the former, apparently, suggested by his love for that Horatius Flaccus of classic days, whose lyric verse he imitated, and whose works seem to have been exempted from that dread of " pagan writings " which beset him in later days. Einhard, skilled as an architect, was known as Beseleel, after the Hebrew artificer mentioned in the Book of Exodus ; Richtrud, the gentle friend of Gisela, was Columba, the dove-maid.

Attractive as was the personality of many of Alcuin's pupils, his position was not without its difficulties, especially with regard to the man who was to rule the Second Empire of the West. He had, for example, to keep in mind the necessity of educating morally as well as intellectually a King whose unbroken success had made him the spoilt darling of Fate, eager to grasp his desire without thought for right or wrong, ready to dash with violence from his path any obstacle to his

will. Thus, in the very same year that Alcuin arrived in Gaul, the latter would have heard of the massacre of four thousand Saxons who had revolted against the rule of Charles ; and who, after being forcibly baptised in the waters of the river Aller, were thereupon cut down and cast into the stream, by the command of a King who happened to have lost his temper with them. Year after year this kind of thing was repeated, so that the King who sat on his stool of learning more often than not showed merciless hands red with the blood of helpless captives. He was also the so-called husband, at one time or another, of nine wives, some bound to him by the sacraments of the Church, and some not. One, at least, of the former, the beautiful and unfortunate Himiltrude, was ruthlessly put away by him in order to marry a princess of Lombardy, who, in her turn, was repudiated for Hildegarde, to whom he was married with the sanction and blessing of the Church, and who became the mother of his six lawful children, before her death left him free to marry Leutgarde.

Not only the King's private passions, but the public morals of the State and the laxity of the Frankish Court had to be dealt with by a counsellor worthy of his post. The way in which Alcuin handled these difficult matters can be best gathered from his letters to his renowned pupil. With regard, for example, to the conquered Saxons, though he approved the King's wish to bring them into the Church, he entirely condemned the force which he employed to carry out his designs. He realised fully that the great obstacle to the acceptance of the true Faith by the Saxon nobles was not so much the loss of their gods as the loss of rank and political influence belonging to the priestly offices held by them. So he strongly advised Charles to soften this genuine hardship of a change of religion by refraining from the imposition of taxes, and by so setting forth the more joyous and happy aspects of the Faith that, when it should become dear to the new converts, they would willingly accept any burdens it might carry with it. Most sensibly he urged the King to send to them missionaries full of

zeal for souls, whose character might inspire admiration and a will to follow where they led. Had Charles followed his counsel, many a long year of futile conflict and terrible oppression might have been avoided. With Louis, his favourite prince and pupil, he was more successful, for when the King had taken a great band of prisoners in a campaign against the Avari, Alcuin persuaded the Prince to support him in an urgent request to Charles that they might be held to ransom, a request which was at once granted.

The moral education of the impetuous King was a long and tedious matter, but in this Alcuin's chief aid was the interest roused by him in intellectual problems, and in the general atmosphere that a scheme of liberal education produced in a Court formerly given up to sensual pleasure. Einhard's picture of domestic life during his sojourn there breathes an air of discipline and simplicity.

"Whilst the sons perfected themselves in corporeal exercises, rode with their father to the chase, or accompanied him to battle, that they

might acquire under his own eye that proficiency so necessary to a Frank, the daughters remained at home occupied in weaving or spinning. At dinner the whole family assembled at the same table. When travelling he rode between his sons, and his daughters followed likewise on horseback."

The royal morals were not the only difficulties with which Alcuin had to deal. When we consider the " curriculum " of the Palace School, it will be very evident that, simple as may have been the mental outlook of Charlemagne, it was impossible to educate him in the same way as a group of young boys and girls. The King was a man of experience, forced to think rapidly and effectively in matters of State, trained therefore mentally as well as physically, even if his hand were more used to a sword than a pen, and his actual book-learning very rudimentary.

Then both Charles and the men who had fought by his side were characterised by a faculty, priceless in education, though not without its drawbacks under certain conditions—the faculty of curiosity, or, as we may prefer to call it, a consummate

interest in all things in heaven and earth. There have been periods, not so very remote, in the history of education, when this condition of mind was snubbed and quenched by the preceptor, who strove, though generally in vain, to drive the unwilling human mind along dry and pathless tracks of knowledge of which he himself, presumably, but not his pupils, knew the end and aim. Even nowadays we are only beginning to realise the futility of such a course, and to see that only that which is literally "comprehended"—i.e. seized by the intellect because of the interest roused by it—is retained and digested for future use.

There is very little doubt that Alcuin appreciated this state of mind to the full, and, as we shall see, he made use of it in every phase of his method of education. But it must be remembered that he had to represent in his single person the attainments of a whole staff of professors, and to pose as an encyclopædia of knowledge in the very varied subjects which aroused the interest of his pupils. He himself was a specialist in orthography, and yet he had to deal

with these pupils, royal and otherwise, bringing an immeasurable stock of curiosity to their class, propounding questions on every topic under the sun, discussing, disputing, misunderstanding, admiring, conjecturing, suggesting.

It is clear that the work of the teacher of such scholars was as full of difficulty as of delight. There is no doubt that his authority was supreme, his wisdom undoubted, his learning revered ; but incessant activity, skilful tact, keen enthusiasm, were all needed to cope with these roving minds, undisciplined save by the exigencies of the battlefield or the demands of practical life, and very impatient under the necessity for repetition and assimilation.

Sometimes it seems that the younger pupils, after the manner of boys in all ages, were inclined to treat his instruction as a joke, to cavil, and break their wit at his expense. Alcuin mentions this, in reproof of their levity, in a letter to the King, though he implies, by using the image of himself as an old pugilist pitted against a young beginner in the art of boxing, that he could take good care of his own dignity.

That sympathy with youthful hatred of dryness and love of fun was not wanting, is clear from one of his poems, in which he describes himself as leaping at dawn from his couch, and running straightway to the fields of the ancients, to pluck flowers of correct speech and scatter them in sport before his boys.

Charles himself seems to have possessed a faculty for " posers," put in a way not invariably courteous or considerate.

One of Alcuin's biographers suggests that his *Dialogue on Grammar*, maintained between imaginary Frank and Saxon youths, was designed to show the kind of heckling to which he himself was often subjected. In no age has such treatment been welcomed by professors, though, as a method of rousing a class to interest, it has its points. But Alcuin disarms the attack by his own delightful frankness and wit in acknowledging his failings as an encyclopædia. " The horse," he says, " which has four legs, often stumbles ; how much more must man, who has but one tongue, often trip in speech." Moreover, he not seldom succeeded in turning the tables neatly

on his royal heckler. Like most men of middle age, Charles found it difficult to memorise, and was easily beaten on this point by the younger pupils. Somewhat peevishly he begins to question the practical advantages of the study of Cicero. "Does he, for example, suggest a means of strengthening the memory?" To which Alcuin replies by quoting Cicero's recommendations of regular practice in speaking, writing, and reflecting; and then, mindful of the special temptations that beset the King, he goes on to improve the occasion by pointing out his insistence upon the avoiding of intemperance, that destroyer of physical health and mental soundness. Even in ordinary life, he adds, the orator must use expressions chaste, simple, clear, distinctly pronounced, unspoilt by immoderate laughter or rudeness of tone.

Before we consider the development of the ordinary curriculum in the Palace School, we must say a word or two about Alcuin's method as a teacher; for it was, as we have already said, the spirit which he introduced into education, rather than

what he taught, which forms the basis for his claim to influence Catholic thought.

It has been said of him that he failed as a great teacher because he was less of a philosopher than a grammarian. To say that he succeeded as a great educator because he possessed the insight and sympathy which alone could divine the intellectual needs of his age, would be nearer the mark. It is certain that philosophy, in the sense in which it was used by the Scholastics, would have been entirely out of place among the Franks of the eighth and ninth centuries. It is equally certain that his teaching of so-called "Grammar" involved intellectual tests and principles of clear thought, such as were not only necessary for the untaught portion of Western Europe, but were to form the basis of the Scholastic philosophy of the future.

It has also been said that Alcuin shows no originality of mind and contributed nothing to the world of thought. The same may probably be said with truth of all the great educators. The work of the teacher is not to invent fresh things, but to think freshly about what is old and trite ;

not to display original ideas, but to present tried, and proved, and often well-worn matter in a new and attractive light. The man who at that critical period, when love and understanding of the things of the mind were largely stifled by material considerations, had insisted upon a startling scheme of "New thought," and had forced his pupils along paths untrodden by former generations, would either have extinguished the flickering spark of intellectual life altogether, or have seen his followers emerge into the sick and evil heresies bred from mental confusions. The mark of a genius in education was rather to revive interest in a well-nigh forgotten tradition and to present thought as old as the hills in a fresh and attractive way. This Alcuin did, with conspicuous success, and by so doing cemented the loyalty of a nation, hitherto bound to Rome only by political considerations, to the faith of Christendom.

In Alcuin's introduction to his *Dialogue on Grammar* we get a hint of his own ideal of education.

"Most learned master," says one of his

characters, " we have often heard you say that Philosophy is the instrument of all the virtues, and, alone of all earthly possessions, never made its possessors miserable. We confess that you have incited us by such words to pursue after this supreme happiness, and we desire to know what is the summit to which we are to climb and by what steps we may ascend thereto. Our age is yet too tender and too weak to rise without the help of your hand. We know that the strength of the mind is in the heart as the strength of the eyes is in the head. Now our eyes, whenever they are flooded by the splendour of the sun, or by reason of the presence of any light, are able to discern what is presented to their gaze, but without the access of light must remain in darkness. So also the mind is able to receive wisdom if there be anyone to enlighten it."

With the insight of the born teacher, Alcuin recognised from the first that this process of enlightenment must be suited to the " tender age " as well as to the child-like stage of mental development of his older pupils. The textbooks at his disposal were, as we have seen, dry and tedious in method, and difficult to be obtained. The obvious thing to do was to write his own— more modern teachers have been impelled

to follow his example for an identical reason. So he had recourse to the ever new and immeasurably old device of throwing his subject-matter into the form of a kind of story, or, at any rate, of a dialogue, and enlivened the tedious details of Latin grammatical forms by the conversation, and questions, and disputes of a typical young Saxon and a typical young Frank, boys of fifteen or sixteen years of age. The younger questions the elder, who is supposed to have the advantage in actual knowledge, but who suffers at times under the witty onslaught of his opponent. Pedantic as much of it is, it is relieved by flashes of humour and personality that actually succeed in breathing life into dead bones.

From its pages we get a good idea of the scope of the curriculum of the Palace School. It is, of course, clear that Alcuin is still in the bonds of St. Gregory, under the spell, that is, of an antagonism towards all that savoured of paganism. Yet, as we should expect from one whose library at York had boasted of some of the chief writers of classic days, he admits under the

head of Grammar, "fables, and histories, and poetry," without dwelling unduly upon their "pagan" aspect.

When, in a dialogue between pupils and teacher of the same book, the former ask to be taught the "lighter branches of learning and to behold the seven degrees of doctrine," they are told, of course, that these consist of Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astrology. The first three of these, the Trivium, are classified as Ethics; the last four, the Quadrivium, as Physics. Both are only useful, he says, as preparing the way for Theology, the Science of God; and the object of all is to form and strengthen the mind for the understanding of the true Faith and to protect it against the errors of heresy.

It is, however, when we glance at his textbook on *Orthography* that the real enthusiasm of the teacher for his favourite subject—apart from Theology, which is the end of all—makes itself felt. It would seem hard, at first sight, to find interest in a treatise on spelling, until we realise that in it we have a courageous and successful

attempt to protect Latin literature from its most insidious foe. During these years of transition and invasion the spoken Latin of Romanised Gaul had quite naturally changed its form; not that it became "corrupt," as some writers put it, but it had developed and altered, according to certain sound laws, until it had become the foundation of a new language, the "French" of later days. The object of Alcuin was to prevent written Latin from following the same course, which would soon have rendered the classical language quite unintelligible. Even had he done nothing more for education, for this posterity would have owed him a vast debt of gratitude. The complete degradation of the written Latin language would have involved a break, not only with the glorious past, but also with the continuity of Christendom. For Latin was then, as ever, the official language of the Church, and the chief outward mark of her Catholicity in days when the swift rise and fall of alien nations might well have resulted in a Babel of confusion. Religion, law, literature, were all equally

affected ; and the man whose treatise on spelling became the universal textbook for Western Christendom may in truth be said to have done much to save the religious, social, and intellectual life of Europe from disintegration.

One feature of Alcuin's teaching, found as frequently in his lessons on arithmetic or geometry as in his lectures on theology, has been greatly misunderstood by Protestant writers. These frequently indulge in mild scoffing at what they call his "superstitious mysticism," his habit of interpreting facts, ideas, numbers, and so on, in what seems to them a purely fanciful manner, by a constant reference to supernatural analogies.

It is, of course, quite true that the days of Alcuin were not the days of science, and that unverified hypotheses, often of a very quaint nature, more often than not take the place of even an elementary kind of investigation. But allowing for this, there yet remain quite good reasons for the employment of this usual method of exposition. The age was one whose crying need was the turning of the mind of man from

the grossly material to the supernatural world ; and Alcuin, like St. Gregory and all other lovers of the souls of men, felt strongly that all he taught was of little worth unless it led immediately to supernatural goals. It is possible that in a period of greater complexity this method of illustrating facts and expressions by "divine analogies" might have resulted in spiritual boredom and intellectual revolt. But in those days, when men were finely simple and direct, it is conceivable that such a treatment of ordinary phenomena would have a fascination of its own, and that the more fanciful the analogy, the more interesting it would become. There is real ingenuity, moreover, for example, in the answer to the question of Singulphus, who, studying the Book of Genesis, asked "Why animals that live on land are more accursed than those that live in water?" To which Alcuin replies that it is because the former consume more of the fruits of the earth, which are accursed; and for the same reason, Christ, after His resurrection, ate fish rather than flesh.

That this mystical interpretation of

nature coloured the whole of mediæval theology is clear enough when we read the works of those who lived after the days of Alcuin. The very fact that it held its ground so long shows that it met a human need, and that the explanation of natural things in a supernatural sense was no bad alternative to the gross materialism of an age that came to reject it.

It might be added that many of these quaint analogies, upon which modern writers place so heavy a foot, were accounted for by that sense of humour that gleams so readily across the pages of Alcuin's writings. A certain modern writer gravely holds him up to scorn because he tells the Emperor Charles that the reason for the reappearance of the planet Mars in the sign of Leo, after a disappearance of some months, is that the Sun feared the Nemean lion too much to detain him longer ! But surely the shocked commentator failed to see the twinkle in the eye of the propounder of this theory, and to hear the hearty laugh with which his questioner received it.

We cannot refrain from noting, in this

context, the poetical and imaginative character of some of these analogies, for definitions they cannot, of course, be called. In a dialogue written for his pupil Pepin, then sixteen years of age, known as "The Disputation of Pepin the most Noble and Royal Youth with Albinus the Scholastic," we find the following queries and replies:

"What is Language?"
"The Betrayer of the Soul."
"What generates language?"
"The tongue."
"What is the tongue?"
"The Whip of the Air."
"What is Air?"
"The Guardian of Life."
"What is Life?"
"The joy of the happy; the expectation of Death."
"What is Death?"
"An inevitable event; an uncertain journey; tears for the living; the proving of wills; the Stealer of men."
"What is Man?"
"The Slave of Death; a passing Traveller; a Stranger in his place."

Chapter VI

THE WIDER INFLUENCE OF ALCUIN

THE success of the Model School of the Palace, under such a teacher as Alcuin, was assured. The next step was to extend the influence of that centre throughout a wider sphere. For the Gallic civilisation, often rightly identified with education, had suffered dire things under the early Frankish rule. Victories there had been in plenty, but of peace and order scarcely a trace. A rule of plunder and lynch law had undermined the ideals of Gallo-Roman days, and an utter lack of sympathy with the conquered or of adaptation to their ways and manners cut at the root of progress.

It had been the honest desire of Charles, long before he fitted on the imperial crown, to amend these things ; but it seems to have been the influence of Alcuin that set the ideal of reform into practical working.

With true insight, the Minister of

Education, as we may now call him, convinced the King that the only effective means of restoring an old and creating a new civilisation in the Frankish world was the Catholic Church. Yet the Church, as represented by the Frankish bishops and clergy, was at that time at its lowest ebb, scarcely, indeed, emerged from that melancholy condition of affairs described by Gregory of Tours two centuries earlier. The reason was evident. Two hundred years of devastation had almost submerged the light of learning in the land. The Gallo-Roman Schools had vanished, those of the monasteries were few and feeble. When the gate of the mental world was closed, the spirit of Gaul flagged, morals died for lack of root and sustenance, men became little else than brutes. As for the dignitaries of the Church, they suffered not only from lack of knowledge, but also from the action of the Carolingians in imposing military service upon them. When bishops were appointed for their prowess in the battle-field, the spiritual fabric wore very thin. Amongst many other such instances, we read of one Gwielieb being appointed

bishop in his father's stead "for the alleviation of his filial grief," when the latter had been killed in battle. The son avenged his father in the ensuing campaign by slaying his murderer in single combat, and was forthwith deposed by the influence of St. Boniface; but his was by no means a solitary instance.

Reform of life and restoration of discipline, though not the abnegation of feudal rights, was the aim of Charles, and Alcuin was in this his adviser and director. Such a reform must come slowly, flowing from a central source; in other words, the School of the Palace must train the bishops who were to carry out in their dioceses the ideals in which they had been educated; and a new spirit must be kindled in the monastic schoolrooms of the country. Not that it was actually new, but as old as Christianity, just as the civilisation that was to come was no new Teutonic ideal, but the Latin civilisation known and tested by the Gallic race in former days, and now to be restored through the influence of a Frankish king and an English scholar, in a form to suit more modern needs.

For five years they waited, pondering, planning, and all the while preparing the ground by long days of learning and teaching in the Palace. Then, in 787, the first and most famous Capitulary of Charles was issued, as the initial step towards stirring up the monastic schools. This "Charter of Modern Thought," as it has well been called, was destined profoundly to influence the Middle Ages and, after them, the future intellectual course of Europe. There is little doubt that it sprang from the brain of Alcuin, as it certainly was shaped into form by him, and we can easily recognise his sentiments in passages dealing with the connection between thought and language, the use of illustration in teaching, the need of zealous instructors and real vocations for the profession—all, it may be noted, topics of present-day interest and discussion.

"Care should be taken," says the Capitulary, "in the bishoprics and monasteries that there should not only be a regular manner of life and one conformable to holy religion, but also the study of letters, so that each may learn and then teach them according to his ability and the Divine assistance.

"For even as due observance of the rule of the house tends to good morals, so zeal on the part of the teacher and the taught imparts grace and order to sentences; and those who seek to please God by living aright, should also not neglect to please Him by right speaking. . . . And, although right doing be preferable to right speaking, yet must the knowledge of what is right precede right action. Everyone, therefore, should strive to understand what it is that he would fain accomplish; and then right understanding will be the sooner gained as the utterances of the tongue are free from error.

"We exhort you, therefore, not only not to neglect the study of letters, but to apply yourselves thereto with perseverance and humility . . . so that you may be able to penetrate with greater ease and certainty the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures. For as these contain images, tropes, and similar figures, it is impossible to doubt that the reader will arrive more readily at the spiritual sense as he is the better instructed in learning."

"Let there be chosen for this work men who are both able and willing to learn, and also desirous of instructing others."

"It is our wish that you may be what it behoves the soldiers of the Church to be—religious in heart, learned in discourse, pure in act, eloquent in speech. . . ."

Such was the manifesto of the greatest

soldier of the Middle Ages, a manifesto inspired by his Minister of Education, and issued just after the submission of the chieftains Witikind and Tassilo had left him for the moment at peace.

A year earlier, no doubt at Alcuin's suggestion, he had obtained from Rome the service of teachers of grammar, arithmetic, and singing, who had already begun to journey from one monastery to another as peripatetic professors of these arts. Music was especially emphasised in the second Capitulary, of 789, after the Council of Aachen had been held.

"Let the monks make themselves thorough masters of the Roman method of chanting, and observe this method in the services, according to the decree of our father Pepin, who abolished the Gallic method in order that he might place himself in agreement with the Apostolic See *and promote concord in God's Church.*"

So by means of this mediæval version of the "*Motu proprio*" did Alcuin bring in a fresh weapon against heathendom, a new cord of love to draw a nation, still largely heathen at heart, into the happy

bonds of Christendom. The songs of a nation are the truest expression of her temper, and Charles, left to himself, would probably have leaned to a national poesy, literature, and language, expressed in those ballads of warfare and sagas of heroes of which he actually began to make a collection.

Interesting as these would have been from a literary standpoint, the acceptance of them as the national voice, at that time, would have set up a very tangible barrier against an identification with Catholic Christendom absolutely necessary for national civilisation and spiritual progress. So Frankish youths sang plain song according to the Gregorian method in place of their own rude melodies, as far as divine minstrelsy was concerned, though the latter survived as folk songs for many a day.

In 789, a third Capitulary, still more obviously inspired by Alcuin, urged the raising of the moral standard of the clergy, and gave a significant recommendation that candidates for the priesthood be sought not only from the servile class, but

also among the sons of freemen. Then once more the necessity for the spread of education was urged.

> " Let every monastery and every abbey have its school, where boys may be taught the Psalms, the system of musical notation, singing, arithmetic, and grammar ; and let the books that are given them be free from faults ; and let care be taken that the boys do not spoil them either when reading or writing."

Some of the results of this vigorous action on the part of Charlemagne and his adviser may be seen even in the period that immediately followed. Eight years after the publication of the last-mentioned Capitulary, an order based upon it, which expressly refers to the influence of Alcuin as " Father of the Vineyards," was issued by his friend Theodulphus, Bishop of Orleans. This stated explicitly that schools were to be opened in every town and village of the diocese, and these were to receive " the children of the faithful for instruction without fee, unless they wish to make an offering."

Here we have the earliest example in mediæval Gaul of free education for the

people. Before the death of Alcuin a regular system of education was flourishing, showing three distinct grades of schools, designed to meet the needs of both Church and State. The first and highest grade, the type of which was that of St. Martin at Tours, founded later by Alcuin himself, was attached to the monastery, and was intended primarily for the education of the clergy, though others were free to attend. In one of his letters to Charles, Alcuin describes the curriculum, which shows a considerable amount of scope.

"I, your Flaccus, in accordance with your admonitions and wishes, endeavour to administer to some in the house of St. Martin, the honey of the Holy Scriptures; others I would fain intoxicate with the pure wine of ancient wisdom; others I begin to nourish with the fruits of grammatical subtleties; many I seek to enlighten by the order of the stars. But above all things, I strive to train them up to be useful to the Holy Church of God, and an ornament to your kingdom, that the unmerited mercy shown to me by Almighty God, and your liberal kindness, may not be altogether fruitless."

The School of the Palace and perhaps that of Tours may have been exceptional,

and were, no doubt, the model institutions for the whole of Frankland. But from a petition made by the bishops of the Council of Paris in 829, that Louis the Pious would establish at least three " public schools " in the most convenient parts of his domain " so as not to suffer the efforts made by Charlemagne for the increase of knowledge to fail from neglect," it seems that at least a few of the Cathedral or Monastery schools were established on the same basis during the days of Alcuin. That they evidently gave a wider education than those of the ordinary monastery is clear from the fact that the latter were numerous during the time of Louis ; but the exact locality of the higher is unknown. Perhaps the most important qualification they possessed was a library ; and it may have been for their benefit that Alcuin makes petition for youths to visit York and bring thence the " flowers of Britain, that the garden of Paradise be no more confined to York."

The second class of school seems to have given its chief, if not its whole, attention to the teaching of Church music and singing.

Of these Metz and Soissons were the best known and for a long time the only ones to teach these subjects with authority. They had been established originally by two singers, Theodore and Benedict, sent specially from the Papal Court by Adrian I, in order to introduce the Roman method of Plainsong. Thither resorted, as to a National Academy of Music, all who wished to be teachers of singing or members of choirs. So far, we have only considered schools for prelates and statesmen, and for specialist musicians. The third and most important class, the true "public" school, was attached to the monasteries, and was open to everyone without fee. Reading, writing, arithmetic, and singing are the subjects actually mentioned, but the first and second would involve instruction in the universal language of the Church. These were the schools that lay nearest to the heart of Charles and Alcuin, and the former is said to have personally visited them, talked to the pupils, urged them to diligence, and seen that the arrangements for their well-being were carried out.

According to the reminiscence of a monk of later days, Charles, on one occasion at least, examined the pupils himself, and soon discovered that the sons of the nobility, "confiding in their rank and riches," failed to come up to the mark, while the poorer lads worked hard and "obtained by their own exertions what fortune had denied them." Sharp rebuke of the former, and reminder that only talent, not birth, was the passport to royal favour, were followed by promises of high office and honourable stations as the reward of labour and perseverance. The social effect of this kind of thing upon a young and plastic nation must have been very marked.

In was in the year 790 that Alcuin appeared in a new rôle—that of intermediary between his royal master and a Mercian chieftain. His intention, apparently, had been to return, in his private capacity, to the Monastery of York, which always held the first place in his heart ; or perhaps to retire from his really very arduous labours in Frankland to rest in his own little abbey on Humber banks, left to him by his

relative Willibrord. But, as he crossed the Channel with this intent, came sudden news that all intercourse between England and the land of the Franks had been suspended.

It seemed that King Offa of Mercia had taken very ill the fact that Charles had received at his Court the refugee Egbert, who had been driven from his kingdom of Wessex by Brihtric, Offa's son-in-law.

The offence was repeated later when Eadwulf of Northumbria, the victim of Ethelred, another of his sons-in-law, followed in Egbert's steps. A hasty attempt of Offa to secure the Frankish alliance and the expulsion of the refugees by a marriage between his son and one of the Frankish princesses had been haughtily refused by Charlemagne ; and there were rumours that he was gathering his forces for a raid on Mercia, or Wessex, or both.

That a disastrous Franco-Anglian war was averted seems to have been mainly due to the practical sense and tact of Alcuin, who knew both lands so well, and whose personality had earned the respect of their rulers on each side of the Channel.

When this affair had been settled, Alcuin might well have hoped for the repose he needed, in a scholarly atmosphere and amid the surroundings of his younger days. But this was not to be found in the England of that period. In 793, we learn from the chronicles that "the ravaging of heathen men lamentably destroyed God's Church at Lindisfarne," and things were not much better three years earlier. "The most venerated places in Britain are given over to the pagan people," laments Alcuin. Had he been a younger man he might have chosen to remain in the midst of desolation, and, as next Archbishop of York, to help to keep the flag of civilised learning afloat in northern England. As it was, he sickened at the sight of the atrocities of revenge by which the chieftain Ethelred celebrated his return from exile, and thought with longing of the more stable government of Charles. Moreover, a new call was sounding in his ears from overseas—a call to defend the Church of Christ, and the Church in Frankland in particular, from the attacks of an insidious heresy.

Chapter VII

ALCUIN AS DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

THE summons which had hastened Alcuin's return to the Frankish kingdom was occasioned by two clouds of heresy which at that time hung over Western Christendom and threatened the welfare of the Church. The stirring up of the dry bones of bygone controversies is dusty work, and the tale need only be told in outline here ; but the importance of the matter in those days was great, both in the religious and political world. The influence of Alcuin on both was marked, and his victory in each case marks a distinct crisis both in Church and State.

The "Adoptionist" heresy[1] had travelled into Frankland by way of Spain, where

[1] The Adoptionists taught that Christ as man was Son of God merely by adoption and free grace. As God, He was Son by nature and generation. This " divided " Christ into two persons. The Catholic doctrine is, that Christ, true God and true man, is one Person, and, as such, true Son of God.—Ed. Cf. I. V., p. 50, on *Nestorianism*.

it had taken root amid the surroundings of a scoffing Mohammedanism, and been encouraged to flourish by an unlearned Archbishop, Elipandus of Toledo, and a weak-willed Bishop, Felix of Urgel. Elipandus was distrustful of his own judgment, though sorely shaken by the scoffs of unbelievers as to the dual nature of the Son of God. He appealed therefore to Felix, who had already won a name for virtue and learning in an unlearned Spain, and who had roused the interest of Alcuin sufficiently for the latter to propose a correspondence with him. His reply to Elipandus, however, made his position only too clear. "He not only replied," says a contemporary, "most imprudently, thoughtlessly, and in opposition to the doctrines of the Catholic Church, that Christ was the adopted Son of God, but in some books written to the aforesaid Archbishop, endeavoured most obstinately to defend the wickedness of his opinion." Elipandus fell an easy prey to specious arguments, and forthwith not only taught heresy but did his best to persecute those who stood firm.

However neatly they had covered up their doctrines in silken wrappings, this heresy was connected with that dealt with by the first General Council, held at Nicaea in 325. On that occasion the Church had clearly set forth her faith in the Divinity of Christ ; but when the storm of Arianism which had threatened to submerge her passed away, it still left certain traces of wrack that threatened the peace of Christendom. Fifth-century Nestorianism claimed that the two natures of Christ were but morally, not personally, united, and called forth the Council of Chalcedon (451) to define the Catholic doctrine of the one person and two natures. Over this article of faith the East still argued and contended ; but Western Christendom, absorbed in warfare, loyal also to its newly adopted Church, accepted and adored. But heresy is contagious, and flourishes on a soil uncultivated and choked with ignorance. Doubt as to the Godhead of Christ travelled to Spain with Eastern heretics and quickly took root among the isolated and unlearned bishops, though some would have no traffic with it and

prepared for strong opposition. Felix of Urgel, unfortunately, was reported learned, and was certainly popular, and his adhesion to the views adopted by the Archbishop of Toledo was a triumph for the unorthodox camp. The infection spread to the Pyrenees and beyond, and raged in the southern province of Frankland ; and a provincial synod, held at Narbonne in 788, seems to have felt itself quite unable to cope with it on the theological side. But a liberty to believe what one pleased, though natural enough in a country ruled by Saracens, was by no means according to the mind of a Catholic ruler such as Charles.

During Alcuin's absence in England he had summoned a synod at Ratisbon, in 792, before which Felix of Urgel was cited to appear in defence or justification of his opinions. The step was marked by the characteristic caution of Charles. Violent repression might well have sent his Spanish subjects into the arms of the Saracens, and the respect due to learning which always stamped the King, also counselled mild measures. But when confronted with the Frankish bishops, some of whom, at least,

must have profited by Alcuin's tuition, the vaunted wisdom of Felix was found without foundation. He wilted before his opponents, and, accepting their decision that his doctrines were heretical, set off forthwith, in charge of Angilbert, the pupil of Alcuin, to Rome. There, in the presence of Pope Adrian I, he solemnly recanted his errors and declared with a solemn oath that he believed our Lord Jesus Christ to be the only and actual Son of God. Yet, before the end of that year, 792, the weak-kneed bishop, harassed by the reproaches of his Spanish followers, and swayed by the entreaties of Elipandus, who had no wish to pose as leader of the heretics, lapsed and returned to the paths of unorthodoxy.

No doubt he justified himself to Charles by a series of cloudy theological arguments, obscuring the main points but impressive by virtue of their incomprehensibility. Perhaps a little scorn for the mental equipment of his adversaries at Ratisbon was manifested. At any rate, Charles determined to play a strong hand. One man, at least, in Frankland could claim

respect and reverence for his theological learning ; so, from his monastery at York, Alcuin must be summoned to deal with the Spanish recalcitrant.

There was another, and still more pressing reason, for summoning a Council to consider the spread of heresy. This also came from the East, with important political consequences, though the doctrinal aspect was far less fundamental.

We have already seen how the Church, in her wisdom, had incorporated certain rites of paganism into Christian worship, thus making the transition of faith easier for the pagan mind, and preventing too jarring a wrench from old and harmless practices. Thus the love of the people of ancient Rome for the statues of their gods and goddesses was permitted gradually to merge into reverence for the image of their Redeemer in the Crucifix and for representations of saints, especially that of Our Blessed Lady. Such pictures, statues, and images appealed strongly to the highly-coloured imagination of the Eastern Empire, and the Byzantine world began to exaggerate a perfectly legitimate aid

to devotion into a heresy. The doctrine of the Church was clear, but had never been formulated. Adoration — *latria* — might only be paid to God ; reverence and devotion, a quite different idea, were permissible to images. The more learned Greeks, it is true, distinguished between worship of the heart and prostration of the body, but the ignorant laity had ceased to observe the distinction. As so often happens in the history of the Church, the heresy was a blessing in disguise, leading as it did to the right emphasis being laid on a half-forgotten or misunderstood doctrine. But in the meantime it had led to certain remarkable political events.

Early in the eighth century, the Emperor of the East, Leo the Isaurian, "stung by the Mohammedan taunt of idolatry," had determined to put down Image Worship with a strong hand. The result in Byzantium was tumult, which developed in Southern Italy into actual revolt; while the Pope, reluctant as he might well be to cut himself off from a ruler to whom he had looked for protection against the robber chiefs of Lombardy, was bound to excom-

municate one who had gone so far as to remove all images of saints, angels, and martyrs from the churches. The result was that a sharp line was drawn henceforth between the Papacy and the Empire of the East, a cleavage which sent Pope Gregory II to the Franks for their assistance. For Luidfrand, King of the Lombards, was quick to throw in his lot with the Image Worshippers as an excuse to attack Rome —an attack which became, as we have seen, the cause of the alliance of the Papacy with the Frankish Empire in the days of Charles Martel.

Other dramatic events were to follow. The controversy between the Iconoclasts and the Worshippers had rent the Eastern Empire, and the two parties had become political factions, fighting on the side of Constantine, son of Leo, an " Iconoclast," or Image Breaker, or of Artabacus, his brother-in-law, rivals for the throne. The triumph of the former led to fresh decrees against images, but to no General Council, since the Pope was not represented.

In 754, however, Constantine summoned a Council at Constantinople at

which all the bishops of the Eastern Empire rejected Image Worship with anathemas many and loud. The Pope, of course, ignored the decrees, and only cemented more strongly his alliance with the Franks against the Lombards and the East.

Constantine saw the public worship of images abolished before his death, but a perfectly natural instinct could not so easily be deleted from the hearts of his subjects. The monks were on the side of the Image Worshippers, realizing, as they did, the need of feeding the flame of veneration among a childlike race by outward and concrete symbols. With them there now appeared Irene, wife of Constantine's successor, and after his death guardian of his young son, a woman of distinct personality.

The aim of the Empress Irene was to restore the unity of Christendom by bringing her subjects into line with the teaching of Rome on this matter. The Patriarch Paul, who had joined Leo in opposing images, was dead, and the new Patriarch was ready to support her, subject to the views of a General Council. The

synod, however, when summoned was neither representative nor brought to a legitimate conclusion.

For at its first session (August 7, 786) in the Church of the Twelve Apostles at Constantinople, the forces of the Iconoclasts broke up the meeting, refusing to allow the Patriarch to speak. When the Court party had dispersed, the Iconoclasts, who remained in possession, confirmed all the decrees against images.

The Empress, however, was not to be thwarted. By her efforts a synod was summoned at Nicaea in the following year, which was attended by representatives of the Pope and was to rank as the Seventh General Council. On this occasion the Church defined her doctrine, and declared that images should receive veneration (*προσκυνήσις*) but not *λατρεία*, the adoration due to God alone.

Thus, through the energetic action of the Empress of the East, a principle long obscure and ill-defined, was laid clearly down for East and West alike. But now the real difficulty began to appear.

For some time past, relations between

the Byzantine and the Frankish Court had been getting more and more strained. It was well known that the Franks had little liking for religious customs to which they had never been used. For in the days when the Roman citizen of the East had been proud to offer gifts, incense, and even prayers to the statue of the Emperor, and had readily transferred such usage to the image of his patron saint, the rough Frankish soldier had boasted of his independence, and had scarce brought himself to salute even the chieftain he served. Moreover, Charles himself had little love for an Empress who had lately broken off the marriage contract between her son Constantine and Rotrude, the Frankish princess, and had allied herself with the foes of the Franks in Lombardy. Thus, when the decrees of a General Council, of which he apparently knew nothing, were made known to him by the Pope, the impetuous King was moved to reject them wholesale. Most unfortunately the decrees appear to have been badly translated and were certainly misunderstood by Charles, who received

them during the absence of Alcuin in England.

What part the latter took in the controversy that followed is very obscure. Roger of Hoveden, an early chronicler, says that Charles sent to Britain the " book of the synod direct from Constantinople in which many things contrary to the faith were found," especially the decree which ordered " that images be adored, which is execrated by the whole Church of God."

Unless this shows blank confusion with the previous Council, which had decreed exactly the opposite of this, it can only refer to the confirmation of the Council of Nicaea at Constantinople. But the wording shows still worse confusion, since the Council had particularly insisted that images should not be adored, but only venerated. Roger goes on to say that Alcuin at once composed a treatise against this adoration, as well he might, and that he obtained for this the assent of the English bishops and chieftains. If so, he was evidently refuting a doctrine that had never been promulgated. It is, however, impossible to believe that Alcuin,

who had never swerved an inch from his staunch loyalty to the Holy See, and who would be especially cautious in dealing with a General Council to which he knew the King was hostile for political reasons, would do or write anything that would appear to condemn where Rome had approved.

This, then, was the position of affairs at the Council of Frankfort summoned by the King in 794. At this, which ranks as a General Council of the West, were present not only representatives of the Church in Rome, Lombardy, the Germanic States, and Frankland, but also of Britain, through the influence, no doubt, of Alcuin. To it Frankfort may owe the origins of its future prosperity as a great centre of trade, for from the time that the newly-built little city saw its streets thronged with bishops, abbots, and laymen from all parts of Western Europe, its position was undoubtedly recognised and developed.

The heresy of the Adoptionists was the first subject dealt with at this Council, and here the leading part was played by Alcuin,

recommended to the Assembly by Charles himself. His refutation of Felix, who was not present, seems to have been based on this occasion almost entirely on the opinions of the Fathers of the Church. It was followed, without any attempt at opposition, by a universal sentence of condemnation, a sentence which was conveyed to Archbishop Elipandus in the shape of an urgent exhortation to forsake the paths of heresy and thus escape the fate of excommunication from the Catholic Church.

The further story of Felix, the actual villain of the piece, whose submission as a French bishop to the decree of a General Council seems to have been prematurely taken for granted, may be told here.

The reply of Felix to the exhortation of Alcuin came in the form of a book supporting his opinions and addressed, not to the Englishman, but to the King himself. It was a direct challenge to Alcuin, and as such Charles bade him reply to it. But he, very wisely, conscious of the fact that Felix was trying to make the matter a personal contest, urged the King to put

it into other hands. It looks rather as if Charles himself was becoming characteristically weary of a subject that had ceased to interest him, for Alcuin's letter ends on a stirring note.

"Arise, thou Champion of Christ, chosen by God himself, and defend the Bride of thy Lord. Thou oughtest to avenge with all thy might, the injury and reproach cast upon the Son of God, thy Redeemer, thy Protector, the Dispenser of all thy blessings. Come forth valiantly in the defence of Her whom the Church has entrusted to thy protection, in order that temporal power may assist thee in acquiring the treasures of spiritual glory."

Meantime, he nominated as suitable supporters the Pope and the Patriarch Paul of Aquileia, the first of whom declared his mind on the matter through a Synod of Italian clergy at Rome. Strengthened by this, Charles summoned a meeting of bishops and theologians at Aachen in 799, at which Felix was forced to appear.

For a week Alcuin was pitted against his adversary, and we may judge very fairly as to the line taken by him in argument. For in later days he published

seven books *Against the Heresy of Felix*, which no doubt furnished him with his subject-matter on this occasion. They are based mainly upon the Scripture, upon the interpretations of the Fathers of the Church, and upon the inconsistency of the doctrine itself ; but he has also a telling hit here and there at the presumption that would strive to explain the incomprehensible and thus make himself the equal of God.

" Could God create from the flesh of a Virgin a real son or no ? If He could not, He is not omnipotent. If He could, and would not, you must give a reason why He did not choose to do so. But if you can give such a reason, you claim that the Will of God is comprehensible by the human mind, and the statement of the Apostle, that God is incomprehensible, is false."

The whole argument is that of a clear-headed thinker as well as a learned theologian, and before it Felix was at length compelled to recant for the second time. He was deprived of his bishopric, and, retiring to a monastery, spent his last years in composing and publishing his

Confession of Faith, which does not, however, seem to have been very convincing to his contemporaries. Elipandus, indeed, secure in his Spanish diocese, not only refused to consider Alcuin's courteous attempts to draw him back to orthodox paths, but wrote an offensive epistle in reply, in which he expressed a hope for his eternal damnation. This drew forth four books *Against Elipandus*, not so much in order to refute an obstinate old man, but, as Alcuin himself says in the preface, " that the minds of any may not be led astray by the perusal of that letter, for we have heard that it has fallen into the hands of others before it reached us to whom it was addressed."

Thus the good and permanent effect of this outburst of heresy was to emphasise and enlarge upon a most important doctrine of the Church at a time when newly converted nations, through sheer ignorance of the matter, might have been tempted to fall from orthodoxy.

The settlement of the Adoptionist heresy was not completed till the last years of the eighth century.

Meantime the controversy concerning Image Worship had had a curious sequel. The Council of Frankfort, when the matter came up for consideration, was labouring under two disadvantages, both fatal to calm and considered judgment. Charles could neither forgive nor forget the fact that the Council which had condemned the Image Breakers had been summoned under the auspices of an Eastern Power, and of a woman in particular, who had declared open hostility to him. Moreover, the decrees of that Council, as laid before the Frankish magnates, were badly translated and utterly misleading, implying as they did that the adoration of images was commanded, in place of being proscribed. How this could have happened it is difficult to see, for Roman legates were present, who must have understood the actual decrees, and who yet seem to have kept silence. It has been suggested that Charles purposely misrepresented the matter in order to stir up feeling against the East and its Empress ; but that explanation scarcely accounts for the sequel. This took the

form of a document, famous more for its energy of style and for the light it throws upon the sentiments of Charlemagne and his contemporaries towards the Papal See, than for its arguments against a heresy already refuted. The Carlovingian papers, as they are known, do, it is true, devote a good deal of space to what was probably a summary of Alcuin's arguments against adoration of images, and so far were simply flogging a dead horse. But, far from showing a spirit of opposition to the Holy See, which had approved the much misunderstood decrees of the Council of Nicaea, they emphasised in every possible way the obligation of reverence and submission to Rome.

"From the commencement of my reign," says the supposedly royal author, "I have striven to form the Churches on this side of the Alps upon the model of Rome, and to establish a perfect unanimity with that Church to the Head of which the keys of Heaven have been committed."

For himself and his realm, therefore, there could be no appeal from the Papacy,

and he proceeds to emphasise the fact that it is not the veneration of images, but their adoration that he cannot approve, a position for which he rightly claims the support of Pope Gregory the Great. The chief sting of the documents, therefore, lies in their uncompromising hostility to the Byzantines and to their rulers, who are accused, not only of idolatry, but of every petty and foolish motive that could make them, and especially their Empress, appear ridiculous in the eyes of Western Europe.

Neither the style nor the spirit of this portion of the document would lead us to claim Alcuin for its author, though it has been freely ascribed to him by modern biographers. Its political aims are made clear by the fact that it was sent by the hand of Abbot Angilbert to Pope Adrian, with an imperative suggestion that its perusal should be followed by the condemnation of both the young Emperor Constantine and his mother, the Empress.

The action of the Pope in reply to this singularly wrong-headed though able document was characteristic of the Father of his people. After allowing the hot-headed

Frank to cool down, he prevailed upon him to consider the Church's declaration as to the right and wrong use of images ; and then, when Charles had discovered that they both met on the common ground of the teaching of Gregory the Great, that images were but the " books of the ignorant," " channels through which the Saints were approached," the means of learning what must be adored and what merely venerated, the whole controversy collapsed. Constantinople was left unharassed by denunciations, and when her troubles broke forth anew in later years Charles played no part as an Iconoclast.

Once more wisdom had been justified of her children. The Adoptionist heresy bore fruit in Alcuin's *Book of the Holy Trinity*, written in seclusion at Tours, and sent to his royal master for the clearing and strengthening of the faith of Frankland. And the uproar as to Image-Worship procured the definition of the doctrine of the Church by a General Council, in a decree accepted henceforth by Catholic Christendom.

Chapter VIII

THE SCHOOL AT TOURS

FOR the first three years after the Council of Frankfort, Alcuin seems to have sat loosely in the Palace School, in the expectation of a settlement at York in the near future. But from Britain came disquieting news of Northern pirates, raids and rapines which rose to a climax in 793, when Lindisfarne, with all its holy associations with the north country, was devastated and profaned, and its inmates murdered or forced to serve as slaves. To Alcuin, as an historian, the situation seemed the darker because he could compare it with the attacks of Angles and Saxons or the Britons more than three centuries earlier. He saw in it, too, a judgment on the slack morals of the time, and wrote in deep anxiety to the Archbishop of York :

" Our ancestors, although heathens, acquired possession, with God's assistance, of that country. What a reproach it would be to lose as Christians what they gained as heathens ! I

refer to the scourge which has lately visited those territories. . . . In the book of Gildas, wisest of the Britons, we read that these same Britons lost their country in consequence of the rapacity and avarice of their princes, the corruption and injustice of the judges, the carelessness and indolence in preaching of the bishops, and the immorality of the people. Let us take heed that these crimes prevail not in our times, that the blessing of God may preserve our country in prosperity."

The troubles of his countrymen gave him no rest, and a year or two later he wrote to King Ethelred of Northumbria, warning him and his subjects, again by the example of history, of the need of justice, loyalty, and obedience, if they would hold their land. But the internal woes of the country were beyond the reach of exhortation by letters, and, finding this, Alcuin determined again to risk the discomfort and possible failure of a personal mission. Just as he was about to set out for England came the news of the murder of the Northumbrian King. This turned the scale against his return to his native land, " for I know not," he wrote to King Offa, " what I should do among those who know

neither how to profit by good counsel nor to afford any kind of security." Within a few months, the death of Eanbald was the occasion of a definite invitation on the part of the Cathedral Chapter to come and take part in the election of a successor. He knew what this meant, and that he himself would be raised to the position of Archbishop of York; but personal ambition had never formed any part of his character. Had he felt capable of playing a strong and leading part in the affairs of his troubled country his sense of duty might have forced him into the post ; but he knew that this was impossible to one of his years and feeble health, one too who was ever a man of thought rather than of action. So he wrote excusing himself on the plea of sickness, pleading also that Charlemagne's consent could not be obtained, since he was absent in Saxony; and with a solemn warning as to their choice, and as to avoiding the sin of simony, he took his leave of England as an active participant in her affairs. But that he still took a strong personal interest in these cannot be doubted, especially as the new Arch-

bishop proved to be his old pupil, another Eanbald, a personage very ready and able to carry on his tradition in the School of York.

Meantime his own circumstances were undergoing change. The bounding vitality and insistent curiosity of his young Franks must have become, by this time, a pressing burden to the old scholar ; and the lively existence of the Court was growing less and less to his taste. In his humility he besought Charles to allow him to retire to St. Boniface's monastery at Fulda, there to lead in peace and solitude the life of a simple monk. But this his royal master would not allow. There was still most important work for Alcuin, a work of reform which could only be effected by a man of wisdom and learning. The Abbot of the Monastery of St. Martin at Tours had lately died, leaving a community slack and ill-disciplined behind him ; and none but Alcuin could succeed where he had failed. " For the purpose of blotting out your ill report," wrote Charles to the monks, " we have invited from far-off provinces and selected

for you a master and ruler most suitable for you, who in his words and admonitions will instruct you in the right path, and also, because he is full of religion (*religiosus*), will teach you also by the good example shown in his conversation."

The Abbey of Tours, beautifully set upon the banks of the river Loire, and including a magnificent cathedral, was the centre of religious life for all Central France. Its abbot was the ruler of vast lands, twenty thousand slaves owned him as master, and his influence upon the population, both spiritual and material, was unbounded. His special care and devotion were, however, for the actual members of the Order, and especially for the young monks whose education now took the place of his former pupils in the Palace School. Into this he now threw himself with a vigour that did not preclude his responding to the frequent call of the King for advice in educational and ecclesiastical matters elsewhere. He was content to be "Minister of Education" and Reformer of Abuses; but he would not again be drawn into the petty contro-

versies of the Court. Half humorously he replies to a tiresome list of queries from the latter, marvelling that "his dearest David should wish to involve him once more in those old questions of the Palace School, and to summon back to the contending camps and to the task of quieting the minds of the mutinous soldiery the veteran who had served his time; especially as he had by him the tomes both of secular learning and of the wisdom of the Church, whence he might find the answer to all his queries."

The charge that was brought against the monks of Tours in a letter of the King, that they had behaved sometimes as monks, sometimes as canons, sometimes as neither, is rather vague, but very soon after the arrival of Abbot Alcuin all such aspersions disappear. Always filled with zeal for the conversion of souls, and burning with love for the younger members of his flock, Alcuin's spirit quickly vitalised the monastery and restored it to the grand position it had held in former days. As we should expect, a right education was made the foundation of reform, and that

it should be upon more strictly theological lines than the Palace School was natural enough. In his own words he tells us that he has no objection to the elder monks " gladdening their hearts with the vintage of the ancient learning," but the younger were to be strictly limited to the " honey of the sacred writings and the apples of grammatical subtlety."

One of Alcuin's first cares was the founding of a good library, and it was for this purpose that we find him petitioning Charles to allow him to send some of the younger monks to England " that they may bring back the flowers of Britain and that these may diffuse their fragrance and display their colours at Tours as well as at York."

" In the morning of my days," says he, " I sowed in Britain ; now in the evening of my life, when my blood is already growing chill, I cease not to sow in France. And I pray with all my heart that, by God's grace, the seed may grow in both lands. As for myself I am consoled by the thought of St. Jerome, that though all else departs, wisdom remains and increases in strength."

His combined zeal and experience in education quickly made Tours the most famous educational centre in the land of the Franks, at least during his own lifetime. Crowds of pupils of all nationalities thronged its gates, and among them, as was but natural, were many from his own native land. But these were not always *personae gratae* to the Neustrian monks of St. Martin's and the inhabitants of the Loire district, who eyed them askance and with suspicion. On one occasion when a "*presbyter Engel-Saxo*" craved admission at the portal, four of these young clerics were heard by him to say: "Here is another Briton or Irishman, come to see the Briton inside. The Lord deliver this monastery from these Britons! They swarm like bees to their hive." The reference was ill-conditioned enough, since all Frankland owed its growing reputation for learning to Alcuin, and its hitherto most famous monastery, Luxeuil, to the Irish monk Columban, who came from Ulster to found it among the heights of the Vosges mountains before the days of St. Augustine of Canterbury. However

Columban had left in the Frankland the seeds of a disaffection that accounted for many of Alcuin's anxieties in later days. It will be remembered that the Irishman had been summoned before a synod of Frankish bishops to answer for a point of heresy as to the date on which Easter should be kept—a minor matter in itself, but important as a token of disobedience to Rome. Something of the same spirit had shown itself elsewhere among the members of the Irish Schools. They persisted in preferring the writings of the Greek Fathers to those of the Latin, which may have been only a token of their better scholarship, but in those days led to a suspicion of a leaning towards the East rather than the West. There was also in their own theological treatises a certain speculative tone, not in itself dangerous, though a source of danger in a period when the foundations of the Faith of newly converted races were not yet tested by the wear and tear of time.

To Alcuin, keenly alive to the difficulties of the nation and of the age in which he worked, anything that was tinged, even

in the slightest degree, with what are now known as "liberal opinions" was anathema. It was perhaps a case of the specialist who, regarding alcohol as the cause of all modern ills, sees damnation in a glass of ale. But to men who did not understand the principles of self-control such a thing *is* poison; and to converts still but partially won from heathendom the smallest deviation from clear-cut doctrines might easily wreck their faith.

We can understand, then, the doubt and dismay with which Alcuin received the news that a certain Clement of Ireland had been appointed by the novelty-loving Charles to his own former post as Director of the Palace School. Hitherto the work had been carried on by two of his own pupils, Witzo and Fredegis, on lines laid down by him. It was not in human nature—even the most disciplined—not to resent the intrusion of the unsound but brilliant Irishman into his own special province; and the annoyance became acute when Charles, ever eager in astronomical learning, obtained from Clement certain information which he forwarded

to his old master, apparently with the idea of correcting the discrepancies in the latter's explanation of the phenomena examined.

The reply shows the attitude of Alcuin clearly enough.

"Little did I dream that the school of the Egyptians had gained an entry into David's palace. When I went away I left the Latins there; I know not who introduced the Egyptians. It is not so much that I have been ignorant of the Memphian methods of calculation as attached to the Roman customs. For I long ago entered the Land of Promise and left the Egyptian darkness behind."

This attitude of Alcuin to the Irish school of thought is echoed, as we should expect, by other theologians who had looked to his influence as their lodestar. Thus Theodulphus of Orleans writes bitter lines against the "Scotellus," or Irishman, "who, though versed in many subjects, knows nothing for certain or true, and even in subjects of which he is ignorant, fancies himself omniscient."

Charles, on the other hand, seems to have taken a mischievous delight in draw-

ing out the opinions of the adversaries, and even tried to get Alcuin to enter into a personal " disputation " with Clement. But the old man refused to leave his cloister for such a reason. " These silly little questions," he wrote, " beset my ears like the insects that swarm at the windows in summer." And he goes on to warn the King against the thin end of the wedge of heresy which he feared these Modernists might insert to the destruction of both Church and Kingdom.

There are those nowadays who would see in his attitude little but the timidity of a conservative thinker. But it was that very quality of conservatism which was so sorely needed in the Europe of the eighth and ninth centuries. Roots had been torn up, an ancient civilisation threatened by new and vigorous nations, delighting in speculation and novelty. Had this been encouraged by the foremost man of letters of the day, chaos, mental and spiritual, would almost certainly have ruled in mediæval Europe. There was, moreover, at that particular time, a very special reason why Charlemagne, the idol of his

people, should in no respect be tainted with anything that smacked of disloyalty to the doctrines taught by Rome. For the great central event of the Middle Ages was at hand, and the man who was to represent the temporal, as the Pope represented the spiritual power of Christendom, must be free from fear or reproach.

Chapter IX

THE SECOND EMPIRE OF THE WEST



HE idea of reviving the Western Empire, which, since the year 476, had been merged in that of the East, must have been in the minds of both Pope and King long before the stirring events of the year A.D. 800. And that Alcuin, as adviser both in temporal and spiritual affairs to the Frankish Court, was well aware of the intended project may be taken for granted. From one of his letters we get a curious indication that he may have given at least a very good guess at the actual date when this event would take place, though it seems to have come as a surprise to Charles himself. For that same Christmas that was to see such momentous happenings at Rome, Charles received as a gift from his Minister and Counsellor a beautifully adorned and carefully corrected copy of the Scriptures inscribed with these words:

"*Ad splendorem imperialis potentiae.*"

To those who would explain the words as a " mere magniloquent flourish," one can but reply that it would be utterly incredible to say that the coronation of Charles, as a solution of the many difficulties of the political Europe of that day, was absent from the mind of an onlooker and thinker such as Alcuin. Already, in one of his many letters to the King, he had impressed him with the fact that as among earthly potentates the first place must be given to the spiritual, the second to the secular power ; so among secular rulers, the imperial power stood higher than the regal dignity.

The conditions of the time were all such as to add weight to Alcuin's suggestion. Within the last century Mohammedanism had assumed alarming proportions, and now possessed a religion and Empire united under the rule of the Commander of the Faithful. But the Christian Commonwealth, apart from its spiritual Head, could claim no leader, since Charles was merely the " Protector " and Patrician of Rome ; and the Byzantine Emperors, her natural leaders, were

not only weak in themselves, but openly hostile to the Pope. Moreover, of recent years, the East had remained Imperial only in name, tending to sever itself more and more from Western Christendom and to cut itself off from Rome. In order to maintain the idea of the Christian State, as well as to oppose the Mohammedan, the Roman Empire, the true Empire of the West, must be revived.

One man alone at that time was fitted to be its temporal head. "The Frank has always been faithful to Rome: his baptism was the enlistment of a new barbarian auxiliary."[1] He had by his wars against Arian, and Lombard, and Saracen earned the title of Champion of the Faith and Defender of the Holy See. As Lord of Western Europe he held the Celtic, Teutonic, and Romo-Gallic nations in his hand; above all, his loyalty to the Holy See had never been in doubt. Already in 796, Pope Leo III, the successor of Adrian, had sent to him the banner of Rome and the keys of the Confession of St. Peter, Rome's holiest shrine. Two

[1] Bryce, *Holy Roman Empire.*

years later, as the Holy Father fled, wounded and helpless from the hands of Roman assassins, it was to Charles's camp at Paderborn that he made his way, and under the Frankish protection that he returned to the Papal city.

All the details of this stirring episode had been of the most intense interest to Alcuin. It was said that the Pontiff, whom his enemies had deprived of sight, had recovered by a miracle ; and when Charles, inclined to be sceptical as to the miraculous side of the affair, consulted his adviser, Alcuin replied with warmth that "Every Christian must rejoice in the divine protection which had been extended to His Holiness, and praise God's Holy Name, who had frustrated the designs of the wicked." He then proceeded to urge the King most strongly to fulfil his duty as the Defender of the Church, to avenge the wrongs and to strengthen the position of the Pope by every means in his power.

Presently it would seem that the enemies and detractors of Leo, trying to excuse their own foul deeds, gained the ear of the Court, for Archbishop Arno wrote to

Alcuin deploring the crimes of which the Pope was accused. But Alcuin, strong in his belief that Leo was innocent, urged Arno "not to deliver up the shepherd of the flock to the prey of wolves," but to prevent any infringement of the rights of the Pope and any violation of the authority of the Holy See.

Possibly the suggestion of a judicial inquiry into these accusations came from Charles himself. That it was vehemently opposed by Alcuin was a natural outcome of his unshaken belief that the Apostolic See, being supreme, could not bow to the will of any lesser tribunal. Even if Leo had erred, who should be his judges? "Were I in the King's place," he writes to Arno, "I would reply, '*He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.*'"

But here Charles stood firm in a position which a visit to Alcuin at Tours in the June of that year left unshaken. On that visit he had apparently been accompanied by his wife Leutgarde, who fell ill there and died, no doubt receiving much comfort and help from her well-loved tutor of

former days. She was buried in the Cathedral at Tours, and thus formed a fresh link between King and Abbot, when the royal mourner sadly betook himself to Metz, to consider his future policy with regard to Rome. Alcuin's opinion he knew well, though he would have wished to have him at his right hand, and he urged him affectionately to " exchange for a time the smoky roofs of Tours for the golden palaces of the Papal city " ; but this the old man declined on plea of ill-health. Yet there is considerable vigour in the way in which he urged the King not to hesitate for a moment to " reinstate that pious spiritual shepherd who had been snatched from the hands of his enemies by the interposition of God, so firmly on his throne that he would henceforth be able to serve God without molestation."

So, in the latter weeks of the last year of the eighth century, Charles led his Franks to Rome ; and there, in full Synod, after due hearing of the cause, he, as Patrician, pronounced the innocence of Pope Leo and the condemnation of his accusers.

The scene that followed some three weeks

later thrilled all Christendom. On Christmas Day the "chieftain of the barbarians," as they were still called at Rome, clad in the sandals and *chlamys*, or brooched cloak of a Roman citizen, was hearing Mass at the High Altar of St. Peter's, when the Pope, descending from the pontifical Chair that stood high above the tiers of ecclesiastics, high above the worshipping multitudes, approached the kneeling Charlemagne and, placing upon his brow the diadem of the Caesars, knelt and touched his garment with the hand he had first placed upon his own lips. A great shout rose from the watching crowd: "Long life and victory to Charles, the divinely crowned Augustus, the Emperor who brings peace." "*Carolo Augusto a Deo coronato magno et pacifico imperatori vita et victoria.*"

"In that shout, echoed by the Franks without, was pronounced the union, so long in preparation, so mighty in its consequences, of the Roman and the Teuton, of the memories and civilisation of the South with the fresh energy of the North; and from that moment modern history begins." [1]

[1] Bryce.

In dwelling upon this central fact of the mediæval world, the coronation of Charlemagne as Emperor of the West, we may seem to have travelled far from Abbot Alcuin in his cell at Tours. The connection, however, is by no means remote. Nothing can be clearer than the aim of Alcuin from the very commencement of his mission to the Franks. Loyalty to the Church, allegiance to its spiritual ruler, unity of faith and doctrine in an age peculiarly open to schismatic and heretical influences were to be emphasised in every possible manner. In no way could this be done better than by the act that made their natural king and chieftain, the object of their deepest loyalty and affection, stand before the Christian and heathen world as the divinely appointed ruler of an Empire which, on its temporal side, almost exactly corresponded with the kingdom of God on earth. Britain stood apart, and north-west Spain, though Einhard, Charlemagne's biographer, claims the allegiance of the latter to his master ; but the rest of Western Europe was by this time so completely in the hands of Charles that his new title

made little actual difference, if any, to his position. The spiritual influence of the return of the Empire, however, and of the open adherence of the Teuton to the Roman civilisation, was unbounded. And apart from its effect upon individual tribes and nations, it accomplished the high ideal which the English scholar had not only formulated, but impressed upon his royal pupil in every possible way—the splendour and the freedom of the Papacy.

From Tours he wrote with eager anticipation of the event, longing to congratulate personally the new-made Emperor. That he had been hindered only by sickness from being present at the ceremony, is clear, for he writes impatiently :

" With a heart filled with anxiety and an ear which devoured every word that fell from the lips of those who arrived, have I daily waited for some tidings of my lord and dearest friend David, to learn when he will return to his native land. At length the welcome sound of a gathering multitude rings in my longing ear. Soon, soon he will arrive ; already has he, whom thou, Alcuin, hast so ardently desired to behold, already has he crossed the Alps. Many times have I exclaimed impatiently, ' O Lord, where-

fore hast Thou not given to me the wings of an eagle ? Wherefore hast Thou not granted me to be transported like the prophet, for one day or even for one hour, that I might embrace and kiss the feet of my dearest friend, that I might behold the brightness of his eyes and hear a word of affection from his lips, who is dearer and more precious to me than all that is precious in the world beside ? ' O, wherefore, envious fever, dost thou hold me captive at so unseasonable a time ? Why dost thou not permit me to move, even with my usual activity, that I might at least be able to accomplish that which cannot happen as speedily as I desire ? "

A visit from the Emperor followed his return from Rome, the main object of which seems to have been to seek advice as to his chief difficulty, his future relations with the Eastern Empire. If so, it must have been by Alcuin's counsel that he sought to make a close alliance with the latter by a marriage with the Empress Irene, then ruling in place of the son she had deposed. Had this actually taken place, interesting developments would have followed, and the course of history would have been strangely altered. Irene, possibly with this idea in mind, at this time

sent ambassadors to Charles with tentative offers of co-operation; to which the Emperor replied by messengers who bore an offer of marriage. But the influence of the eunuch Altius, one of those strange, abnormal personalities that only the East could produce, was dead against a power that would completely overwhelm his own. Before the eyes of the Western ambassador a revolution took place which hurled Irene from her throne and shattered the plans of Charles. Not until the year 811 did the Emperor of the East acknowledge Charlemagne as Lord of the Western World and Emperor of Rome.

Chapter X

THE LAST YEARS OF ALCUIN



HE four years that were to elapse between the coronation of the Emperor and the death of Alcuin were marked not only by strenuous educational work and constant correspondence, but by a curious and unhappy incident that left the last days of the old scholar by no means unclouded.

The visit of Charles after his coronation seems to have been the last personal meeting between the two men, although the Emperor not only urged him to come to the Court, but maintained his custom of asking his counsel in every critical matter of State. On one of these occasions, at least, Alcuin must have been intimately concerned. The Emperor was meditating an attack in force upon Beneventum, whose young duke, Grimoald, aided by the Greeks, had lately declared his independence. This Grimoald was a Lombard who, as a boyish hostage, had been sent

to the Court of Charlemagne and in all probability had been one of Alcuin's pupils at the Palace School. There he had won, not only the warm affection of his master, but also that of Charlemagne, who made him Duke of Beneventum, and was all the more furious when his generosity was repaid by ingratitude and disloyalty.

But when he consulted Alcuin, the old man was all on the side of peaceful negotiations with the lad whom he still held in tender remembrance, and would have persuaded even the fierce Charlemagne, had not Grimoald's obstinacy precipitated a war that was to last till the peace made with Constantinople in 811.

Many letters belong to this period, although Alcuin himself declares that henceforth he intends to assist the Emperor by his prayers alone. Thus, when Charles renewed his efforts to spread Christian learning throughout the land, he writes:

"If only there were many who would follow the illustrious desire of your intent, perchance a new, nay, a more excellent Athens might be

founded in Frankland. For our Athens, being ennobled by the mastership of Christ the Lord, would surpass all the wisdom of the studies of the Academy. That was instructed only in the Platonic discipline, and had fame for its culture in the seven Arts; but ours, being enriched beyond them with the sevenfold plenitude of the Holy Spirit, would excel all the dignity of secular learning."

His own immediate interests absorbed much of his time; for not only was the reform of discipline to be brought about at Tours, but the monastery under his care was to be made famous for its theological learning and, as a means towards that end, for the accurate copying of books. Rare books had been obtained, as we have seen, from England and elsewhere, but, in the transcription of them by careless scribes, many a slip might be made. The King himself had apparently never overcome a difficulty in punctuation, for some short time before his coronation as Emperor Alcuin sent him a tactful letter saying that he had copied on some parchment sent by the King a short treatise on correct diction, with examples from Bede, and another

"containing figures of arithmetical subtlety compiled for amusement."

"Although the distinctions and sub-distinctions of punctuation give a fairer aspect to written sentences, yet, from the rusticity of scribes, their employment has almost disappeared. But even as the glory of all learning and the ornament of wholesome erudition begin to be seen again by reason of your noble exertion, so also it seems most fitting that the use of punctuation should also be resumed by scribes. Accordingly, though I accomplish but little, I contend daily with the rusticity of Tours. Let your authority so instruct the youths at the Palace that they may be able to write with perfect precision whatever the clear eloquence of your thought may dictate, so that wheresoever the parchment bearing the royal name shall go, it may display the excellence of the royal learning."

At the entrance of the Scriptorium at Tours, the room in which Abbot Alcuin personally presided over the worthy task of conserving sound learning, he had affixed certain Latin verses of his own composition.

"Here let the scribes sit who copy out the words of the Divine Law, and likewise the hallowed sayings of holy Fathers. Let them

beware of interspersing their own frivolities in the words they copy, nor let a trifler's hand make mistakes through haste. Let them earnestly seek for themselves correctly written books to transcribe, that the flying pen may speed along the right path. Let them distinguish the proper sense by colons and commas, and set the points each one in its due place, and let not him who reads the words to them either read falsely or pause suddenly. It is a noble work to write out holy books, nor shall the scribe fail of his due reward. Writing books is better than planting vines, for he who plants a vine serves his body, but he who writes a book serves his soul."

Not only punctuation became his care: he was the first to introduce the new "script," a method of writing that forms a link between the old uncial letters and those of the modern alphabet, thus marking a most interesting milestone in the development of the craft of the pen.

If the zeal of Alcuin for the preservation of literature was keen, his interest in the mental and spiritual development of his young monks was keener still. It was small wonder that, like St. Paul, he regarded all things as worthless dross save

such as would best fit them for the prize of their high calling. When they turned their eyes longingly to the pleasant pages of the classic poets they were promptly recalled. "What need have you to dim your minds with the rank luxuriance of Virgil?" he cries. "Surely the sacred poets are sufficient for you!" When his favourite Sigulf and two of his companions ventured to study Virgil in secret, they were summoned to the presence of the omniscient abbot and sharply reprimanded. "How is this, Virgilian, that unknown to me and against my express command, thou hast begun to study the pagan poet?" His care for their intellects was extended to their physical needs. When his pupil Raganard tried to mortify his body with excessive vigils and fastings, he went too far and brought on a violent fever.

"So when Father Alcuin came to visit him," says his biographer, "he commanded all save Sigulf to leave the apartment, and then began: 'Why hast thou, without asking counsel of anyone, attempted to practise such extreme austerity? Perceiving that thou hadst an inclination to do so, I caused thee to sleep in the

same chamber with myself, but as soon as thou supposedst that all were asleep, thou didst kindle a light in thy lantern and watch the whole night.' Those things which he had done most secretly, which God only could know, Alcuin discovered to him and added: 'When thou camest to me, and I bade thee drink wine, thou didst cunningly reply, "Father, I have already drunk enough at my uncle's." When thou didst visit thy uncle, and he likewise bade thee drink, thou didst say thou hadst already drunk with me. Thou didst intend to impose upon us and hast deceived thyself. Beware, when thou art cured of this fever, that thou act not so imprudently.'

"When Raganard heard this, he was ashamed and frightened at having been detected; and finding that he could conceal nothing from Alcuin, he asked him, in astonishment, how he had become acquainted with this. Even to the present day, he solemnly protests that no man knew it but himself. He repented of his foolish attempt, and never afterwards acted without Alcuin's counsel or command."

Not only his monks, but those of his pupils who became secular priests and teachers in other schools were the objects of his care and interest. We find him entreating and finally prevailing on Charlemagne to allow him to distribute among

such of those as lacked this world's goods the wealth belonging to him as Abbot of Tours.

These last years of Alcuin were, however, to be clouded by a serious disagreement with his former friend Theodulphus, Bishop of Orleans, a matter that brought down the wrath of the Emperor, not upon his old master, but upon the monastery he ruled. It happened that a certain cleric in the diocese of Orleans having been sentenced by the bishop to imprisonment, escaped from prison and took sanctuary at St. Martin of Tours. On this the angry bishop obtained a warrant from the Emperor demanding the restitution of the fugitive, and threatening force if he were not given up. The abbot took no notice, and forthwith Theodulph, at the head of an armed band, appeared at the gates of the monastery and, without parley with Alcuin or the fraternity, rushed into the church. Naturally enough the indignant monks hastened to defend the sanctity of their abode, and called upon the townspeople to come to their aid. Upon this, a great crowd of those who knew of the generosity and charity of the inmates, ran to their

rescue, and would have torn the armed men to pieces had not the monks themselves rescued them and given them shelter within their walls.

It seems that Alcuin at the time knew nothing of these things, either because of illness or absence, or more likely because of the rapidity with which it all happened. But when the bishop had departed in great wrath to lay the affair before the Emperor, he took a strong line, and determined to stand by his monks and to defend the sanctuary of St. Martin to the last. Wisely, however, he sent a plain and simple statement of the facts to his old pupils, Witzo and Fredegis, then living at the Court, that they might contradict whatever exaggerated reports might reach the Emperor.

"I beseech you, my dearest sons," he says, "to throw yourselves at the feet of my lord David, justest and noblest of Emperors, and demand, if the bishop should appear, to debate the matter with him, whether it is proper that a man who has been accused of a fault should be dragged by force from the sanctuary to the punishment from which he had escaped? Whether it is just that he who has appealed to

Caesar should not be brought before Caesar? Whether it is proper that one who repents of his error should be deprived of all that he possesses, even of his personal liberty, and whether the word of the Lord is to be regarded when He says *Mercy rejoiceth against Judgment*? If you submit all this to the consideration of my lord the Christian Emperor, whom no advantage can allure from the paths of truth and justice, I know that he will not annul the resolutions and decrees of the holy fathers."

But the matter involved a stiff fight. The Emperor sent Count Theobert to Tours to inquire into the circumstances, and the count took such a haughty and severe tone towards the townsmen and monks that Alcuin would have none of him. The bishop retorted by a mandate from the Emperor to surrender the fugitive to his diocese; and Alcuin refused to obey it on the ground that the accused had appealed to Charlemagne and could be judged only by him. The result was a crushing communication from the Emperor, in which he roundly scolds the whole fraternity for Alcuin's action, disregards the fact that the abbot had assumed the whole responsibility, and takes the dis-

regard of his mandate as a clear token that the monks are living in " disposition to rebellion and disregard of Christian charity."

" For yourselves know how often your conduct has been evil spoken of by many, and not without reason. Hence, anxious for your welfare and wishing to obliterate the memory of your past misdeeds, we appointed you a skilful teacher and superintendent ; we summoned him from a distant land, that he might instruct you by precept and exhortation, and that the example of a pious man might teach you to live holy lives. But alas ! we have been grievously disappointed ; the devil has found in you an instrument to sow discord among those whom it least becomes, even among the teachers and doctors of the Church. . . . You, however, who have despised our commands, you monks or canons, by whichever name you call yourselves, know that you are arraigned before our tribunal ; and should you attempt, even by sending a letter here, to excuse your former resistance, you shall nevertheless appear, and make due reparation for your past fault."

The quarrel recalls a struggle of days to come, when Henry II and Archbishop Thomas of Canterbury fought over a similar question ; and as in those days, the Church held by her right. A strong

letter from Alcuin defended the conduct of his monks, and meantime the fugitive was dismissed to safe quarters and vanished from the pages of history. No doubt the Emperor was thankful to let the matter drop.

The worry had, however, preyed upon the delicate constitution of the old man, and before many months had passed Alcuin knew his end was near. Eight years earlier, on the eve of his going to Tours, he had written wistfully to his old friends at York:

"My fathers and brethren, dearer than all else in the world, pray do not forget me, for alike in life or death I shall ever be yours. And peradventure God, in His mercy, may grant that you, who nursed my infancy, may bury me in old age. But if some other place shall be appointed for my body, yet I believe that my soul may be granted repose among you through your holy intercession in prayer."

The touching words suggest whither the weary old abbot was turning his eyes in those last days ; yet it was but fitting that his mortal part should rest in the land to which he had given the best of his life. He had always hoped that he might die upon his favourite feast, the Feast of

Pentecost ; and on that day, the 19th of May, 804, just as dawn broke and the chant of Prime was heard in the Cathedral hard by, he passed away.

The epitaph, composed by himself, that commemorates his resting-place at Tours, breathes the humility of this " Lover of Wisdom " as well as his sense of the transitory nature of earthly fame.

Hic, rogo, pauxillum veniens subsiste viator,
Et mea scrutare pectore dicta tuo ;
Ut tua deque meis agnoscas fata figuris,
Vertitur en species, ut mea, sicque tua.
Quod nunc es, fueram, famosus in orbe viator,
Et quod nunc ego sum, tuque futurus eris.
Delicias mundi casso sectabar amore ;
Nunc cinis et pulvis, vermibus atque cibus.
Quapropter potius animam curare memento,
Quam carnem, quoniam haec manet, illa perit.
Cur tibi rura paras ? Quam parvo cernis in antro
Me tenet hic requies, sic tua parva fiet.
Cur Tyrio corpus inhias vestirier ostro,
Quod mox esuriens pulvere vermis edet ?
Ut flores pereunt vento veniente minaci,
Sic tua namque caro, gloria tota perit.
Tu mihi redde vicem lector, rogo, carminis hujus
Et dic : Da veniam, Christe, tuo famulo.
Obsecro nulla manus violet pia jura sepulcri,
Personat angelica donec ab arce tuba :
Qui jaces in tumulo, terrae de pulvere surge,
Magnus adest judex millibus innumeris.
Alcuin nomen erat Sophiam|mihi semper amanti,
Pro quo funde preces mente, legens titulum.

"O thou who passest by, halt here a while, I pray, and write my words upon thy heart, that thou mayst learn thy fate from knowing mine. What thou art, once I was, a wayfarer not unknown in this world; what I am now, thou soon shalt be. Once was I wont to pluck earthly joys with eager hand; and now I am dust and ashes, the food of worms. Be mindful then to cherish thy soul rather than thy body, since the one is immortal, the other perishes. Why dost thou make to thyself pleasant abodes? See in how small a house I take my rest, as thou shalt do one day. Why wrap thy limbs in Tyrian purple, so soon to be the food of dusty worms? As the flowers perish before the threatening blast, so shall it be with thy mortal part and worldly fame.

"O thou who readest, grant me in return for this warning, one small boon and say: 'Give pardon, dear Christ, to thy servant who lies below.' May no hand violate the sacred law of the grave until the archangel's trump shall sound from heaven. Then may he who lies in this tomb rise from the dusty earth to meet the Great Judge with his countless hosts of light.

"Alcuin, ever a lover of Wisdom, was my name; pray for my soul, all ye who read these words."

Chapter XI

AFTER YEARS : EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCE

THE old English scholar had passed from the land of his adoption, but, being dead, he yet spoke, and with no uncertain voice. Seldom has one who never claimed to be an original thinker left a more impressive mark upon his age. We have seen how he had preserved and taught knowledge that had been in sore danger of perishing throughout a great empire, an empire, moreover, that had no natural bent for literature or intellectual labour. Once more, too, we may remind ourselves that what that particular period needed was not the heady drink of original and possibly heretical conjecture, acceptable as that would have been to the minds of a race who, like the Athenians of old, were ever on the look-out for some new thing. What the Franks were in need of was the sound and tried learning of the days of Europe's greatness as a whole, ways of

thought that led into the broad high-roads of Roman civilisation, the old truths that had stood the test of centuries. So we find Alcuin stating clearly, in reference to the teaching of the Fathers of the Early Church, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, and St. Gregory :

"I have preferred to employ their very thoughts and words rather than to venture anything of my own audacity, even if the curiosity of my readers were to approve of it ; and by a most cautious manner of writing, I have made it my care, by the help of God, not to set down anything contrary to the thought of the Fathers."

To Theodulphus, his successor in the Palace School, he urges the teaching of the liberal arts, but on the old lines. Speculation must be avoided, and so he warns him against the specious attractions of the "new teaching" of the Irish School of thought.

To the monks of the Irish monasteries themselves he writes :

"Exhort your boys, most holy fathers, to learn the traditions of the Catholic doctors, for

the times are evil, and many false teachers arise. . . . Notwithstanding this the study of secular letters is not to be set aside. Let Grammar stand as the fundamental study for the tender years of infancy, and the other disciplines of philosophical subtlety be regarded as the several ascents of learning by which scholars may mount to the very summit of evangelical perfection. Thus, with increase of years, shall come increase of the riches of wisdom."

Further light upon the influence of his ideals is thrown not only by the contents of his educational treatise but by many of his letters. Thus, his tender interest in his old school at York is shown in an epistle to Eanbald, his former pupil, the Archbishop of York, who had written to consult him about the organisation of his classes.

" Praise and glory to the Lord God Almighty, that I, the least of the servants of the Church, was spared to instruct among my sons one who should be held worthy to become a steward of the mysteries of Christ, labouring in my place in the Church wherein I was nursed and instructed, and presiding over the treasures of learning to which my beloved master, Archbishop Elbert, left me his heir. . . . Provide

masters both for your boys and for the grown clerics. Separate into classes those who are to study in books, those who are to practise Church music, and those who are to be engaged in transcription. Have a separate master for every class, that the boys may not run about in idleness, nor occupy themselves in foolish games, or be given over to other follies. Consider these things most carefully, my dearest son, to the end that the fountain of all wholesome erudition may still be found flowing in the chief city of our nation."

It is, however, when we turn to his educational treatises that we are most struck with the sound philosophy and almost modern psychology of his teaching. He is never the mere crammer, but always the true teacher.

"We need," he makes his pupils say, in the introduction to his *Treatise on Grammar*, "to be instructed slowly, with many a pause and hesitation, and like the weak and feeble, to be led by slow steps until our strength shall grow. The flint naturally contains in itself the fire that will come forth when the flint is struck. Even so there is in the human mind the light of knowledge, that will remain hidden like the spark in the flint unless it be brought forth by the repeated efforts of a teacher."

He goes on to state his philosophy of education, showing that since eternal happiness is the real aim of every rational being, he is concerned with the things that are proper and peculiar to the soul that is to live for ever rather than with those that are alien to it.

"That which is sought from without is alien to the soul, for example, the gathering together of riches; but that which is proper to the soul is what is within, that is to say, the graces of wisdom. Therefore, O man, if thou art master of thyself, thou shalt have what thou shalt never have to grieve at losing, and what no calamity shall be able to take away."

"Wisdom is the chief adornment of the soul, and therefore I urge you to seek this above all things. It is an inseparable property of the soul and therefore immortal."

In his insistence upon the right order of mental advance he anticipates the teaching of Froebel by eleven centuries. "Progress must be gradual. Men should be led by the steps of erudition from lower to higher things (from the simple to the complex). . . . Until your wings grow stronger by degrees, so that you may

mount on them to view the loftier visions of the pure ether, i.e. general notions."

"Master," his pupils cry, "raise us from earth by your hand, and set our foot upon the steps of wisdom." To which he replies, "Wisdom is built upon the seven pillars of the liberal arts, and it can in no wise afford us access to any perfect knowledge unless it be set upon these seven pillars or ascents," a reference to the Book of Proverbs, which says, "Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath hewn out her seven columns." Asked to name them, he replies, "Grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. On these the philosophers bestowed their leisure and their study; and by reason of these philosophers the Catholic teachers and defenders of our faith have proved themselves superior to all the chief heretics in public controversy. Therefore let your youthful steps, my dearest sons, run daily along these paths until a riper age and a stronger mind shall bring you to the heights of Holy Scripture."

The second *Dialogue on Grammar* has

been derided with undue haste and energy, because of its definition of the subject as the " Science of written sounds, the guardian of correct speaking and writing." Those, however, who contrast this with the wider conception of Imperial Rome, which included the study of the great poets and orators, overlook a most important and characteristic fact of Alcuin's days. It was a time when, owing to the influx of barbarian speech and letters, there was imminent danger that the Latin tongue would be completely submerged, both as regards speech and literature. If this loss occurred the study of ancient poetry and oratory would obviously be possible only to a very few advanced scholars, much as Hebrew is to-day. This threat accounts for Alcuin's meticulous insistence upon correct grammar, in the strict sense, and careful transcriptions of classic writers. He did not save the speech of Gaul, which developed as inevitably as the civilisation of her people ; but he did preserve that very literature which he has been accused of ignoring. This, too, was the motive of his treatise on

Orthography, used, no doubt, in the Scriptorium at Tours, with its motto :

> " Me legat antiquas vult qui proferre loquitas,
> Me qui non sequitur, vult sine lege loqui."

(Let him who would fain utter forth the traditional language, read me, for he who follows me not, is fain but to speak at random.)

In this treatise we find an energetic effort to get rid of the barbaric elements in contemporary Latin at the stage when it was about to develop into French. " If you mean a *berry*, write bacca, with a *b* ; but if you mean a *cow*, write vacca, with a *v*. By no means consider *beneficus*, a man of good deeds, the same as *veneficus*, a poisoner. Do not mix up *bibo* and *vivo*." [1]

Another side of his character as an educator is seen in the gleams of fun and wit that show his understanding of the natural merriment of child nature, as well as of his child-like pupils, the burly warriors, men of the battlefields and the

[1] From a very early date *b* and *v* were carelessly confused and almost interchangeable, in MSS. and inscriptions. *V* was pronounced almost like *w*.

camp. In his " Propositions " he speaks of " studying the fair forms of numbers " with Charles, and sets forth a series of arithmetical puzzles for " whetting the wit of youths." We can hear the shout of laughter that would follow on the answer to the question, " After an ox has ploughed all day, how many steps does he show in the last furrow ? " The catch lies, of course, in the fact that the furrow covers up all traces whatsoever. Another tries to crack the famous nut which gives a ladder with one hundred steps—one dove on the first step, two on the second, and so on. How many doves on the ladder ? This is worked out, on no principle, but with enormous labour, to show that on the first and ninety-ninth steps together there are 100 doves, and the same on the second and ninety-eighth, and so on, till a total of 5,050 doves is arrived at.

Another deals with the gathering of an army in geometrical progression through thirty towns, and amounts to a total of over a thousand million, all counted, it will be remembered, in Roman numerals, with immense patience and toil.

Sometimes the pupils are teased thus: "Let 300 pigs be killed in three batches on successive days, an odd number to be killed each day." But as the odd numbers cannot add up to an even sum, this is an impossible proposition, and the master cries, with a laugh, "*Ecce fabula!* There is no solution. This is only to torment boys."

Again we find in his letters, not only his tender care for individual pupils, but also a pretty turn of wit, a playful vein of fancy that must have appealed strongly to young readers.

"Let Christ be on your lips and in your heart, my dearest son," he writes to a pupil who was inclined too much to love of the theatre and of declamation. "Act not childishly, and follow not boyish whims, but be perfect in all uprightness and continence and moderation, that God be glorified in your works and that the father who bore you may not be ashamed. Be temperate in food and drink; it is better to please God than to please actors, to look after the poor than to go after buffoons. Be old in morals though young in years."

To the young princes, he writes, in their father's absence, from Tours:

"To my dearest sons in Christ, their father wishes eternal welfare. I would write you a great deal if only I had a dove or a raven to carry my letter on its faithful pinions. Nevertheless I have given this little sheet to the winds, that it may come to you by some favouring breeze, unless perchance the gentle zephyr change to an Eastern blast. But arise, O South, or North, or any wind, and bear this little parchment to be your greeting and to announce our prosperity and our great desire to see you well and whole, even as a father should desire his sons to be. O, how happy was that day when amid our labours we played at the sports of letters! But now, all is changed. The old man has been left to beget other sons, and weeps for his former children, who are gone."

In the note to Count Wido there is a good example of his pithy thought. "He who would be always with God ought frequently to pray, and frequently to read. For when we pray we are speaking to God, and when we read, God is speaking to us."

One is tempted to dwell on this human side of the old monk, an aspect, moreover, that as much as anything else kept his memory green in Frankland. But the pen of Alcuin was busy in other ways

besides correspondence and educational treatises.

The Gospel of St. John, that wonderful treatise which deals with spiritual vitality in all its aspects, had a special appeal for one who, hampered though he might be by physical weakness, yet knew the secret of abundant intellectual and spiritual life. His method of dealing with it was his own, or, rather, that of the age to which he belonged, a method which interpreted details in a mystical fashion that at once lighted up the natural world with the rays of the supernatural, without swerving a hair's-breadth from the literal interpretation of the doctrines laid down therein. Thus, to give one brief example, in describing the miracle of the changing water into wine at Cana of Galilee, he begins by stating that this signifies the purification and strengthening of the Law at the coming of Christ. Then turning to the details of the event, he sees in the six vessels which held the water the holiness of the Saints of the Old Testament, who during six revolving ages held up an ideal of purity of life to the ancient world. The vessels are of

stone, he says, to signify the strength of their hearts, strong in their love for that stone which Daniel saw "torn without hands from a mountain, and which became so great a mountain that it filled the whole earth." He connects this also with the seven "disciplines" or divisions of knowledge, since it was upon the "One Stone" that Zachariah beheld "seven eyes"; and with the saying of St. Peter, "Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house."

Other commentaries appeared from time to time from the pen of the indefatigable Abbot of Tours. He had already written during his years at the Court School a kind of Catechism on the Book of Genesis, and a "Short explanation of the Ten Commandments." Now, in his greater leisure, he wrote an Exposition of some of the Psalms, full of poetical thoughts and mystical interpretations, and a Commentary on the Song of Solomon that gave full scope for his delight in explaining the signification of numbers in a spiritual sense. Again, for the benefit of those pupils "who had flown from the nest of

his paternal care into the open firmament of worldly occupations" to the Court of Charlemagne, he wrote a Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes, taken largely from St. Jerome, but marked by his own pithy thought and practical piety.

The fact that all these were written for the laity, especially for his own pupils in the world, is a remarkable answer to those who accuse the mediæval Church of closing the Bible to all but the religious, in the technical sense of the word. The Commentary on St. John's Gospel, for example, was written for Gisela, the sister of Charlemagne, and for her friend Richtrud, his "little dove," who looked for it with such impatience that he was obliged to send it to them bit by bit. There is also an interesting letter of this period, anent the query of a soldier in Charlemagne's army, who asks for a reconciliation between the words of Our Blessed Lord in bidding His disciples buy swords, "selling all that they had" in order to do so, when elsewhere He warned His followers that all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword. In

dealing with this, Alcuin points out the distinction between the sword of the Word of God and the weapon of earthly revenge, and adds his expression of pleasure that the laity had begun to interest themselves in points of Gospel study, wishing that Charlemagne had many more such soldiers as the man who had thus confided his difficulties to him.

These works were followed by a treatise on St. Paul's Epistles to Titus, Philemon, and the Hebrews, and by brief commentaries on some sayings of St. Paul and upon the Apocalypse. Less original though even of greater value liturgically are his *Book of the Sacraments*, *Office for the Dead*, and *Treatise on the Ceremonies of Baptism*, rearranged and set in order from older liturgies.

Then we get a tiny group of philosophical treatises, that *On Virtues and Vices*, dedicated to Count Wido ; *On the Nature of the Soul*, dedicated to Gundrada ; and *On Simony*, addressed to the monks of St. Martin ; and these again were followed by four lives of saints—St. Martin of Tours, "as in private duty bound," St. Vedast,

St. Riquier, and St. Willibrord, his own relative and benefactor. A Life of Charlemagne is mentioned by Einhard, the biographer of the Emperor, among Alcuin's works, but of this no trace can be found. It must, in any case, have been incomplete, since Charles survived him by ten years.

All the writings mentioned here were received by the literary world of that day with the greatest interest and enthusiasm. Learned abbots wrote to beg that he would honour their libraries with a manuscript dealing with the life of the founders of their orders, and the Emperor himself waited eagerly for each new book, and not seldom begged that these might be written especially for his instruction and pleasure. One other aspect of his literary work is more than commonly interesting. With the return of the classic writers came also the rage for versification upon their models, and Alcuin was no exception to this. His turn of mind, indeed, was essentially poetical, possessing as he did the power of vision, the poet's fancy, and the poet's dream. Hence, in lines that often overstep the limitations of classical metre and some-

times experiment in the new medium of rhymed verse, the old monk gives us prayers, inscriptions for books, for churches and altars, addresses to friends, epitaphs, epigrams, and riddles. He wrote also a long poem on the Saints of the Church at York, based, of course, upon Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, which is interesting for personal reasons, containing as it does the inventory of the books found in his time in the York library; and if this belongs to earlier years, this is not the case with his poem, *On the Mutability of all Human Affairs*, called forth by the sack of Lindisfarne by the heathen Danes.

His dogmatic treatise *On the Trinity*, dedicated to Charles and written at Tours during the last years of his life, as well as that *On the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, were both echoes of the heresy promulgated by Felix and Elipandus in former years, and bear witness to the loving care of Alcuin for the orthodoxy of the land of his adoption. Useful as was his pen, however, in those years at Tours, the influence exerted by him over certain pupils of marked personality, destined to

carry on his work in yet wider circles, is still more important, and deserves a chapter to itself. Enough has perhaps been said to justify the comment of Laforêt, " His erudition comprises both the worlds of secular and of sacred learning. He brings before us the most familiar philosophy, history, and poets of Greece and Rome ; and on the other hand he exhibits a knowledge of the whole of ecclesiastical history and Church doctrine." [1]

[1] Laforêt, *Alcuin restaurateur des sciences en Occident sous Charlemagne.*

Chapter XII

THE LEGACY OF ALCUIN TO EUROPE

THE ten years that elapsed between the death of Alcuin and that of Charlemagne in 814 were a time of consolidation for the work of both. Reforms in Church and State were still necessary, and the effect of the teaching of the master of the Palace School was directly seen in the fact that Charles spent his last days in correcting the Vulgate translation of the Gospels. To the Emperor an admiring world has also ascribed the authorship of one of our greatest Catholic hymns, the *Veni Creator*, but though this dates from his age it was in all probability the composition of another of Alcuin's pupils, a greater scholar if not so great a personality.

It is by the work of this man, Rabanus Maurus, as well as by that of the schools founded in the years after Alcuin's death, that we can measure best the intellectual and educational mark left by the English

scholar upon the Europe of the ninth and tenth centuries. Let us first take a brief glance at the condition of education in general during the first half of the ninth century.

The immediate successor of Charlemagne, Louis the Pious, shows to a high degree the influence of his former master, though in his reaction against the ancient classics he outdoes Alcuin. The pagan poetical songs which he had learnt in youth he would have nothing to do with, and wished not to read, hear, nor learn them, says a contemporary biographer. In his days, however, a great advance was made in the educational scheme of things. At his Council of Aachen in 817, acts said to be "among the boldest and most comprehensive ever submitted to a great national assembly" were put into force, under the influence of Benedict of Aniane, one of Alcuin's most intimate friends. As these included a tightening of discipline under the Benedictine Rule, one result was to cause a dual system of education. Monastic schools were to be for monks alone, or rather for oblates, those who were

hoping to become monks in the future. The lay schools were connected with a cathedral, and were under the general supervision of the bishop. Here such boys as intended to become priests were under the charge of one of the canons, known as the Scholasticus, as in the days when Alcuin filled the post at York.

The education of these Cathedral schools was as careful and thorough as that of the monasteries, though more general in its scope. Perhaps its inferiority lay in the difficulty of obtaining books, since these still gravitated to the monastic libraries.

"We may picture to ourselves," says Bass Mullinger in his *Schools of Charles the Great*, "a group of lads seated on the floor, which was strewn with clean straw, their waxen tablets in their hands, and busily engaged in noting down the words read by the *Scholasticus* from his manuscript volume. So rarely did the pupil in those days gain access to a book that 'to read' (*legere*) became synonymous with 'to teach.'

"The scholars traced the words on their tablets, and afterwards, when their notes had been corrected by the master, transferred them to a little parchment volume, the treasured depository of nearly all the learning they managed to acquire in life."

The last statement needs qualification. In modern days we are so accustomed to regard education as book-learning only that we are apt to forget, not only the large field of knowledge that lies outside the library, but also the fact that our bookless forefathers carried their libraries, to a very large extent, " in their heads." The memory was trained to an amazing extent, and though this, on the whole, is apt to hinder rather than aid the power of reasoning, it did provide the material for such intellectual effort and rendered the use of books far less necessary.

The reforms made by Louis, in accordance with the ideals of Alcuin, aimed directly at the " advancement of the State in holy learning and holy life." Every boy who wished to attain any kind of post connected with the Church—and *clerici*, who were not priests, were very numerous —had not only to attend school, but to equip himself to become a teacher. The poorer scholars were to be provided for by the richer. At a meeting of bishops at Paris in 823 it was expressly enforced that " each bishop should henceforth exer-

cise greater diligence in instituting schools and in training and educating soldiers for the service of Christ's Church."

Six years later the bishops beseech the Emperor to promise three large " public schools " in the three most suitable places of the Empire, in order that his father's efforts and his own might not fall into decay.

How far these schools ranked as the " Universities " of that period it is difficult to judge, seeing that they were so soon to be overwhelmed by the tempests that followed the disruption of the Empire in 841, after the death of Louis. But the very fact that such a scheme of general education was afoot in ninth-century Frankland speaks volumes for the influence of Alcuin, especially when we remember that our own English system of primary education is barely fifty years old.

The effect of Alcuin's work is, however, seen still more clearly in the monastic schools carried on by those who had sat at his feet as pupils, either at Aachen or at Tours.

At the famous school of Corbey, near

Amiens, Adelhard and Wala, cousins of Charlemagne, maintained the standard of sound learning, in spite of much interference and many political earthquakes, until the onrush of the Northmen swept away their abbey in the middle of the ninth century, and caused a new foundation, of the same name, to be made in Saxony.

This is but one instance of the spread of education, owing to what seemed on the surface to be its greatest foe. Another touches England closely, for, from St. Bertin, another monastic school under the influence of Alcuin, came Grimbald, King Alfred's " mass-priest " and Minister of Education in the end of the ninth century. But by far the most important example of the influence of Alcuin's system is seen in the work of Rabanus Maurus, at Fulda, in a school which took the place of St. Martin's at Tours in days when the successor of the Englishman had allowed the latter to fall into decay. The cause of the fall of St. Martin's from grace is significant. It began to demand fees from its scholars and received " externes,"

the sons of wealthy laymen who wished for an exclusive and aristocratic establishment. From that time until it became, for its wealth, a mark for the plundering instincts of the Northmen in the middle of the ninth century, St. Martin's declined in reputation, and Fulda took its place as the first "School" in Frankland.

Rabanus, the young monk whom Alcuin had affectionately named Maurus, after St. Maur, the favourite disciple of St. Benedict, had spent but a year in study at Tours; but in that time he had absorbed so many of the ideals of his master that henceforth Alcuin's influence was to permeate the School of Fulda to which he returned. The difficulties of Rabanus in carrying on his scholastic reforms were many. His abbot, Ratgar, had a passion for building rather than for learning, and snatched books from the hands of his monks, bidding them go and lay bricks. Some of them actually died of overwork, but there was no redress. For the archbishop, to whom, on his approach to dedicate the church, the monks appealed, showed himself on the side of the manual

labour. Not only did he consecrate a building raised literally out of the " blood and bones " of the builders, but he encouraged the creation of another new church some few miles away. The unhappy monks, who had petitioned in vain for a few books, " lest the instruction we have received should fade from memory," and probably at the instigation of Rabanus, appealed to the Emperor. Before their deputation could arrive, Ratgar rushed to forestall them at Court, and it was with great difficulty that an inquiry of bishops was brought about. These drew up a formal agreement as to hours of work and study, but as they remained to consecrate the last new-built church, Ratgar was encouraged to begin the building of a " cell," that is a daughter monastery on a small scale, some distance away. This was the last straw, and a justly indignant community expelled Ratgar, who, in later days, returned and lived the life of a humble penitent within its walls for thirteen years.

It was some few years after Ratgar's fall that Rabanus became Abbot of Fulda, and

set to work to fulfil his aim of making that School the most famous of its day (cf. I. V., p. 69).

In his book, *De Institutione Clericorum*, we get strong proof of the influence of Alcuin, as well as much interesting light on the opinion of the time as to the worth and importance of education. In his discussion of the practical use of learning to the clergy, Rabanus, as becomes an apt pupil, goes beyond his master. He would have his scholars, in dealing with pagan philosophy, " spoil the Egyptians " by baptising those doctrines that harmonise with the Christian faith, as St. Thomas Aquinas was to do four centuries later. He adds a practical suggestion.

" Preachers must see that they are within the comprehension of their audience, must consider the needs of the multitude rather than those of the cultured few. Dialectics must be known that the clergy may be able accurately to discern the craftiness of unbelievers, and to confute their assertions by the ' magical conclusions ' of the syllogism."

His method of dealing with the superstitions of his age, though scientifically

inexact, is too enlightened not to quote, all the more because it throws a flood of light upon the kind of people with whom Alcuin and his followers had to deal.

The moon was in eclipse, and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood of the abbey would "fain renew help."

"Some days ago," says Rabanus, "when I was thinking over in the evening, within my house, something that should be to your spiritual good, I heard outside an outcry that seemed as though it would reach the sky. On inquiring the cause of this alarm, I was told it was intended to aid the waning moon. Horns were blown as though to raise the neighbourhood to battle; some imitated the grunting of swine; others flung darts of fire in the direction of the moon, which they said a monster was tearing in pieces and would certainly devour did they not come to the rescue. Some even cut down the hedges of their gardens and smashed all the crockery in their houses, in order to scare away the monster. My brethren, all this is but a fancy. God's hand is over all His works to protect them, and man is far too feeble to render Him aid. This appearance of the moon has a simple natural cause. For it is evident that when the moon, whose orbit is the less, comes between, the sun cannot pour his light upon our eyes, and

this happens during the time of his rising ; and in like manner, the moon, which is lightened by the sun, becomes obscured by the shadow of the earth at full moon. No need is there then to seek to give her help. God has thus ordered it and He knows right well how to manage all His creatures."

There is extant an interesting testimony to this worthy pupil of a great teacher. Einhard, the biographer of Charles, had sent his young son to be educated by Rabanus at Fulda, and writing to the boy he bids him—

" Strive to follow the example of the good and on no account incur the displeasure of him whom I have exhorted you to take for your model ; but, mindful of your vow, seek to profit by his teaching with the utmost degree of application that he would approve. For, thus instructed, and reducing what you have learnt to practice, you will be wanting in nothing that relates to the knowledge of life. And even as I exhorted you by word of mouth, be zealous in study and fail not to grasp at whatever of noble learning you may be able to get from the most lucid and fertile genius of this great orator."

Through the pupils of this man the influence of Alcuin was spread far and

wide. "Wherever in Church or State," says one of the biographers of Rabanus, "a prominent actor appeared at the period, we may predict that he will prove to have been a scholar of this notable teacher."

When it is realised, moreover, that he was the founder or the director of twenty-two monasteries and convents, from which both Celtic and Latin scholars drew their stores of learning, "a poet and the inspirer of poets" also, Rabanus Maurus may well be said to have been the "finest fruit of Alcuin's seed-planting."

From him was handed down an unbroken tradition of educational method and subject-matter that stood even the shocks of the invasion of the Northmen, terrible as were the effects of these upon learning as a whole. Where in England all such traditions vanished, and had to be painfully built up again by Alfred and his successors, they can be traced unmistakably in France up to the very foundation of the University of Paris in the twelfth century.

For Lupus Servatus, the pupil of Rabanus, and afterwards Abbot of Ferrières,

brought back to some extent the classical literature on which Alcuin in his later years had looked but coldly; and he and Rabanus together educated the mind of Eric, tutor to Lothair, the son of Charles the Bald, and close intimate of the King. Eric's school of Auxerre became, after Fulda, the chief centre of learning for Frankland, and among his pupils was Remy of Auxerre, a famous scholar who taught both at Rheims and at Paris. At Paris one of his most notable pupils was Odo of Cluny, a saintly and austere young monk from St. Martin of Tours. At Cluny, Odo not only brought about great reforms in education, but also revived the strict observance of the Benedictine Rule. It was his pupils who upheld the standard of education throughout the tenth century, and brought their influence to bear upon the Canons of Ste. Geneviève at Paris, and upon their Cathedral School.

When Paris became the headquarters of the Capets in the eleventh century, pupils flocked there from Tours, Chartres, and from the growing foundation of Le Bec; and in the early years of the twelfth

century William of Champeaux opened his School of Logic, the germ of the future University.

Strong, however, as was the influence of Alcuin upon the educational tradition of the mediæval world, it is not to this alone that he owes his title to greatness as a Catholic thinker. It is rather that he was one of the first to see with extraordinary clearness the needs of the age in which he lived, and to foresee those of the succeeding periods.

To a young vigorous nation, that knew no discipline save that of the battlefield, must be given the ideals of Law and Order that could come only by recognition of an authority supreme over temporal princes. And so it came about that the chief task of Alcuin was the strengthening of the bond between Church and State and, above all, the definite acknowledgment of the Papal supremacy.

This was safeguarded most by all that could best develop the Latin civilisation, which even in the days of Charlemagne had more than once been threatened by waves of Teuton barbarism. Had this

threat materialised, Western Europe would have become purely Frankish in character, " wiping away that form of civilisation which for nearly six centuries Rome had evolved by standing as a buffer between Gaul and German, combining with her own fine material the mysticism of the one and the fierce combativeness of the other."

It has been said of this period that the " Franks formed a hinge of ancient and modern civilisation nearest in arms, in settlement, and in law to the vanguard and outposts of Rome," and this is certainly due to a very large extent to the influence of the English scholar. But this influence was exercised not only upon Charlemagne, but upon the chief men of his age, and through them upon succeeding periods. Together they brought back order and mental culture, " fusing the West into a compact whole." Together they prepared the way for the new intellectual forces of scholasticism that were to oppose the thrusts of the Mohammedans in the years to come. For the seed of mental effort must be sown

in darkness, and it is more than likely that Aquinas would never have given his thoughts to the world had not Alcuin's quiet but persistent efforts prepared the way in earlier years by conserving ancient learning, the mind to learn and the methods that regulate valid thought.

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